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THE RING

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Paul Williams now tries to connect with people using his words rather than his fists.

TODD BENNETT

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George Groves (right) and James DeGale appeared to be headed toward a rematch of their 2011 fight, which Groves won by majority decision.

JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

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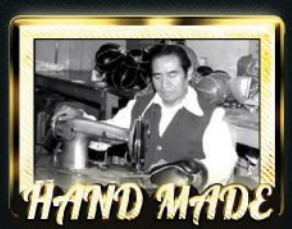

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HEIRS APPARENT

A common question: Who will carry boxing on his shoulders after Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao retire? I don't have a pat answer.

I like the crop of young stars who are rising to the top, no one more than Gennady Golovkin. The Kazakhstani was the runaway winner of a RING poll of 15 experts who were asked to list the five fighters they believe have the ability, charisma and connections to replace Mayweather and Pacquiao. (See Page 38.)

However, as gifted and polished as Golovkin seems to be, I don't believe he's the perfect candidate. I don't think one exists at the moment.

Golovkin seems to have all the ability in the world – skills, speed, power, passion – but he has yet to beat an elite opponent. We think we know what we're seeing but we can't be certain.

And can a fighter who speaks Russian as a first language and lives in Germany resonate with fans in North America? A connection is being made but no one knows how strong it will ultimately become.

Canelo Alvarez, who finished No. 2 in the poll, probably will be the top pay-per-view attraction post-Mayweather-Pacquiao because of his strong fanbase but he lags behind Golovkin and others in terms of ability.

Sergey Kovalev, No. 3, is similar to Golovkin: very good all-around boxer (as he proved against Bernard Hopkins), tremendous power, speaks Russian. There is a lot of potential there.

Keith Thurman, No. 4. Fascinating candidate. He also seems to have the ability, fights with infectious fire and is a good communicator. It will be intriguing to follow him as he continues to evolve.

Deontay Wilder, No. 5. Also intriguing. He remains relatively raw but the undeniable punching power – as well as his monstrous size (6 feet 7 inches) – could make him a major star if he can win championships. Big if.

Anthony Joshua, No. 6. The Briton, an Olympic gold medalist, is best equipped to take the baton from Wladimir Klitschko as the top heavyweight but he's young. Think Lennox Lewis but more engaging.

Nos. 7 through 15 – Andre Ward, Felix Verdejo, Adrien Broner, Terence Crawford, Danny Garcia, Mikey Garcia, Roman Gonzalez, Jose Ramirez and Nicholas Walters – also were listed for a reason. They have ability and something beyond that sets them apart even if they aren't the perfect heirs apparent to Mayweather and Pacquiao.

Here's the thing, though: Mayweather and Pacquiao weren't perfect candidates at one time either. Mayweather had all the ability but limited power and charm. Pacquiao came out of nowhere with tremendous gifts but limited ability to communicate beyond his smile.

And we know where they ended up.

I don't know which of the fighters listed above – which should include Vasyl Lomachenko, who somehow was overlooked – will emerge as the king of boxing. Maybe they'll rule by committee, which is probably how it should be. The more the merrier.

The important thing is that I look at these names and smile. There is good reason to be excited about the future.

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XAUME OLLEROS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sylvester Stallone knows something about being on camera … even when he's holding it. "Rocky" was at the Manny Pacquiao-Chris Algieri fight in China.

COME OUT WRITING

PREDICTABLE

It's extremely difficult to prepare for the kind of tools and technique that Manny Pacquiao presents in the ring, as Chris Algieri learned on Nov. 22 in Macau, China. You need more than power and speed to stop this man. You need a lot more than a good jab and good footwork. Manny has by far the best footwork in boxing today and all-time great ring smarts. The way he is able to corner his opponents and use his ring generalship to close your exits and "keep you in your cage" is stuff of legends. Manny is still the best fighter alive by far. He still has power and his speed is still there. And he looked determined to perform in an impressive manner. I don't see anybody between 140 and 154 pounds who can beat him. Only Keith Thurman, Erislandy Lara, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and probably Shawn Porter could be competitive but all of them will lose.

Juan Valverde
Tijuana, Mexico

MISMATCH

I'm sitting at the Macau airport trying to work out if I have been taken for a ride by Top Rank for the second time in two years. I've attended both of Manny Pacquiao's fights in Macau and I can honestly say something has been missing: a worthy opponent. This has got to stop. Chris Algieri seems to be a very decent bloke. He should not have been in the ring with Pacquiao, however. Two minutes into the fight it was clear he was going to try to survive rather than fight. I'm not sure if I'll be making the trip again if Top Rank doesn't find someone in the same class as Pacquiao for his next fight.

Craig Brewer
Singapore

TIME TO RETIRE

I've been a Manny Pacquiao fan for a long time and after this fight I would like him to retire. He was flat-footed and didn't cut the ring off as well as I thought he could. When he hurt Algieri it didn't look like he could finish him off. I used to think that Manny looked this way because he didn't train hard enough for the fight but now I just think he's old and he doesn't have that in him. His loss against Juan Manuel Marquez has made him more cautious. I love the man but it's time to move on before he gets hurt too much. Only a fight with Floyd Mayweather Jr. makes sense and I don't see it happening, no matter what rumors surface.

Jey Kalimuthu
Brampton, Ont., Canada

BELT GLUT

I have been a boxing fan for quite a long time now and I can see the excessive belts subject – and by extension the numerous sanctioning bodies – negatively affecting boxing beyond anything else except possibly bad judging. I recognize that this has been brought up on numerous occasions but it seems to get brushed under the carpet or conveniently forgotten. When WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman took over from his father, he did mention this was something he would look into. However, there has been little mention of it since. I still do not understand which belt is for what. It waters down the achievement of becoming a champion, purses are affected and it opens up our great sport to ridicule. I would like to see genuine change in this area because up to now we boxing fans continue to get fed blatantly empty words.

Alastair Bartlett

ENCOURAGING

I'll admit that I'm very happy that Oscar De La Hoya has taken the lead to repair relationships with other promoters and the networks. Maybe I am kidding myself but I am also hoping he can lead the best fighters toward four or more fights year after year. I respect him because he fought everybody you could've asked him to fight. He obviously wants to make the best fights as a promoter as well. I recently went back and watched Mike Tyson's rise in the '80s. It's amazing how often he fought. If Oscar can produce a fraction of that for other fighters, boxing may become a mainstream sport again. As fans, we get down on the status of the sport. We complain about mismatches and fight results because with such inactivity among the best, every date on the calendar needs to give us a hefty fix of the sweet science. He may never read this but, "Oscar, give us the best fights and MORE fights."

Jalaal Aleem Madyun
Minneapolis

KOVALEV IMPRESSIVE

It required a good deal of patience on Sergey Kovalev's part to maintain a range-based, jab-first strategy supported by volume combinations but he stuck to his game plan in his victory over Bernard Hopkins. I have no doubt that he could have gotten Bernard out of there even with Hopkins' defensive skills. But that would have required Kovalev to press the action against a master of the game and open himself up to risk. The fact that he didn't pursue a knockout indicates he is an intelligent force to be reckoned with in the light heavyweight division. Hopkins, on the other hand, wowed us with his defensive acumen. He was soundly beaten but did what many young fighters in their prime could not: He survived.

Vincent Santino
New York

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JABS & STRAIGHT **WRITES**

BY THOMAS HAUSER

'JAIL IS A BAD PLACE'

MUHAMMAD ALI BRIEFLY TASTED LIFE BEHIND BARS AS A RESULT OF 'HATE CLAY HYSTERIA'

Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali) was willing to go to prison for his beliefs even after tasting life behind bars.

CLIVE LIMPKIN/EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

Muhammad Ali was once in jail but it wasn't for refusing induction into the United States Army. In December 1968, while the appeal of his criminal conviction and five-year sentence for refusing induction was pending, Ali was sentenced to 10 days incarceration in Dade County, Florida, for driving without a valid license.

"He got sentenced for being Cassius Clay," Ali's lawyer, Henry Arlington, told reporters at the time. "Everyone is caught up in the hate Clay hysteria."

Ali later said of the experience: "Jail is a bad place. I was there for about a week until they let us out for Christmas and it was terrible. You're all locked up; you can't get out. The food is bad and there's nothing good to do. You look out the window at cars and people and everyone else seems so free. Little things you take for granted like sleeping good or walking down the street, you can't do them no more. A man's got to be real serious about what he believes to say he'll do that for five years. But I was ready if I had to go."

If British boxing writing in the 19th century belonged to Pierce Egan, then the 20th century was the domain of Hugh McIlvanney. Herewith, a few quotes from each man.

Pierce Egan: "No men are more subject to the caprice or changes of fortune than pugilists. Victory brings them fame, riches, and patrons. Their bruises are not heeded in the smiles of success. Basking in the sunshine of prosperity, their lives pass on pleasantly until defeat comes and reverses the scene. Then, covered with aches and pains, distressed in mind and body, assailed by poverty, wretchedness, and misery; their friends forsake them. Their towering fame expired and no longer the plaything of fashion, they fly to inebriation for relief and a premature end puts a period to their misfortunes."

Hugh McIlvanney, on the possible use of headgear and other protective measures in professional boxing: "If the game loses its rawness, it is nothing. If it ever became a kind of fencing with fists, a mere trial of skills, reflexes, and agility, and not the test of courage, will, and resilience that it is now, it would lose its appeal."

Pierce Egan: "It seems scarcely possible that any man can die in possession of the championship unless he die young."

Hugh McIlvanney: "Professional boxing is the most truly egalitarian of sports; a world in which great champions and obscure journeymen are equally exposed to barefaced robbery."

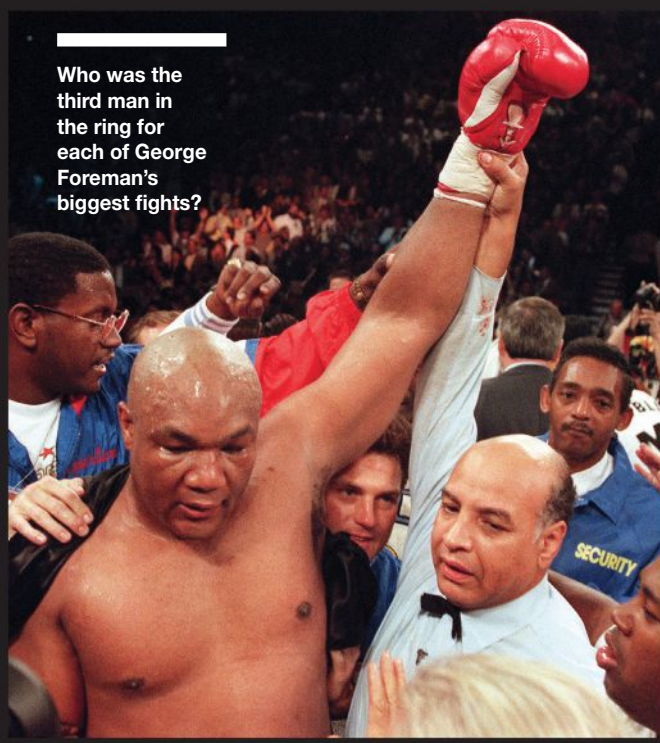
On Nov. 8, Martha Salazar and Tanzee Daniel fought for the vacant WBC women's world heavyweight championship.

Salazar is 44 years old and had won one fight in the previous nine years. Daniel had four career victories, which came against fighters with a combined ring record of 3-3-1. She was 37 years old and winless in her previous four bouts. Salazar won a unanimous decision.

This gives new meaning to the term "world heavyweight championship."

Martha Salazar

QUICK QUIZ



Who was the third man in the ring for each of George Foreman's biggest fights?

1. AT A TIME WHEN THERE WERE ONLY EIGHT WORLD TITLES IN BOXING, HENRY ARMSTRONG HELD THREE OF THEM SIMULTANEOUSLY. WHO DID HE BEAT TO WIN THEM?

« **2.** THE PIVOTAL FIGHTS IN GEORGE FOREMAN'S CAREER WERE HIS 1973 KNOCKOUT OF JOE FRAZIER TO CLAIM THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP, HIS 1974 LOSS TO MUHAMMAD ALI IN ZAIRE AND HIS 1994 KNOCKOUT OF MICHAEL MOORER TO RECLAIM THE THRONE. WHO REFEREED EACH FIGHT?

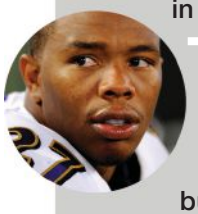
3. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO HAS LOST THREE TIMES, ALL BY KNOCKOUT, IN HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER. WHO BEAT HIM?

Quick Quiz Answers: 1. Armstrong beat Petey Sarron (KO 6) on Oct. 29, 1937, to win the featherweight title. Next, he decisioned Barney Ross on May 31, 1938, to claim the welterweight throne. Finally, on Aug. 17, 1938, he decisioned Lou Ambers for the lightweight crown. ★ 2. The referees were Arthur Mercante Sr. (Foreman-Frazier I), Zach Clayton (Ali-Foreman) and Joe Cortez (Foreman-Moorer). ★ 3. Klitschko lost to Ross Purrity (KO 11 on Dec. 5, 1998), Corrie Sanders (KO 2 on March 8, 2003) and Lamon Brewster (KO 5 on April 10, 2004).

If boxing's world sanctioning bodies ran the National Football League, we'd see the following playoff scenario:

The **New York Jets** would finish with a record of 3-13 but be ranked No. 6 in the AFC in order to qualify for a playoff slot.

The **Cincinnati Bengals** would be paid step-aside money so the Pittsburgh Steelers could take their place in the playoffs.



Ray Rice would be cleared to play because, in the words of one sanctioning body official, "Beating a lady is highly critical but it is not a major sin or crime."

Each playoff game would have one **"neutral" official**. All of the other officials would be from the home state of one of the competing teams.

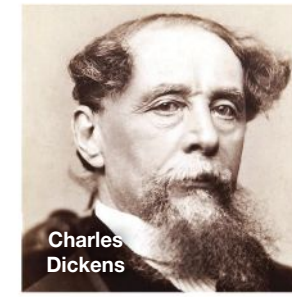
Sanctioning body officials would invade the players' locker rooms after the game and badger players for their game-worn jerseys.

Official replicas of the **Lombardi Trophy** awarded to the Super Bowl winner would be sold online at NFL.com.

And of course, there would be six Super Bowls, giving rise to a Super Bowl champion, a Silver Super Bowl champion, an Interim Super Bowl champion, a Diamond Super Bowl champion, a Super Bowl champion emeritus and a Super Super Bowl champion."

CORTEZ: JOHN GURZINSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES RICE; NICK WASS—AP; OFFICIAL: AP;

For those of you who wonder what the life of a boxing writer is like, here's a sampler.


Charles Dickens

Not long ago, I was reading "The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit" by Charles Dickens when the telephone rang. There was no "Hi, Tom" or "This is Lou." The first words I heard were, "These mother f---ers better be careful or I'm going to blow them out of the water."

It was my good friend Lou DiBella, who is a man of passion and one of my favorite people in boxing. We talked for a while and then I went back to reading Dickens.

"It was a clear evening with a bright moon. The whole landscape was silvered by its light and by the hoar-frost, and everything looked exquisitely beautiful."

Ring!!!

I picked up the phone.

"Do you know what those mother f---ers just did?"

Agitated conversation. Then back to Dickens.

"I am in love with one of the most beautiful girls the sun ever shone upon. … If I didn't tell her I loved her, where would be the use of my being in love?"

Ring!!!

"I can't stand it anymore. This is such a miserable f---ing business."

"She is gone now. And of all unlikely things in this wide world, it is perhaps the most improbable that I shall ever look upon her face again."

Lou DiBella

Ring!!!

And so it went all afternoon. Dickens and DiBella. Two great men and some of the most memorable prose in the history of the English language.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book ("Thomas Hauser on Boxing: Another Year Inside the Sweet Science") was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

10 A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

This month: Boxers who have or had a famous relative outside boxing.

MAX BAER
Son **Max Baer Jr.** played Jethro on "The Beverly Hillbillies"

GENE TUNNEY
Son **John Tunney** was a U.S. Senator from California

ERNIE TERRELL
Sister **Jean Terrell** replaced Diana Ross as lead singer of The Supremes

KEN NORTON
Son **Ken Norton Jr.** played in the NFL

FRANKIE CAMPBELL (FRANCISCO CAMILLI)
Brother **Dolph Camilli** played Major League Baseball

MIKE DONOVAN
Grandson **Art Donovan** played in the NFL

VICTORIANO SOSA
Second cousin **Sammy Sosa** played Major League Baseball

JAMES J. CORBETT
Brother **Joe Corbett** played Major League Baseball

HENRY BUCHANAN
Nephew **Shawne Merriman** played in the NFL

VIRGIL HILL
Ex-wife **Denean Howard** was an Olympic sprinter

Ken Norton Jr., the son of Ken Norton, had a successful NFL career.

ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, reader and Advanced Degrees devotee Gregg Morgan connected 160-pound sensation **Gennady Golovkin** and Hall of Fame middleweight **Marvin Hagler** in five steps.

MARVIN HAGLER
FOUGHT …
SUGAR RAY LEONARD
WHO FOUGHT …
TERRY NORRIS
WHO FOUGHT …
JORGE VACA
WHO FOUGHT …
MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO
WHO FOUGHT …
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

GOOD, BAD, WORSE

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH

By **Michael Rosenthal**

GOOD

I'm often asked to name the most memorable fight I've ever attended. The fight between George Foreman and then-IBF titleholder Michael Moorer on Nov. 5, 1994 – 20 years ago as I write this – is near the top of the list. Foreman had become a popular crossover figure by this time, in part because of his grills. And he was 45, which would make him the oldest ever to win a world title if he emerged victorious. That was the backdrop. Then there was the fight itself. Moorer dominated his plodding, old opponent for nine-plus rounds. I remember a colleague saying to me repeatedly, "This is a travesty." And then, right on cue, a tremendous right hand pierced Moorer's gloves and down he went in Round 10. I have never heard a sound as loud as that produced by this crowd after Moorer hit the canvas. I could've yelled at the top of my lungs and not heard myself. It gave me chills. Foreman regained a heavyweight title almost exactly 20 years after losing the championship to Muhammad Ali in 1974. And he couldn't have done it in a more dramatic way. I'll never forget it.

BAD

I believe Wladimir Klitschko has evolved into an excellent heavyweight, one who could've been competitive with any heavyweight in history. The sad thing is we'll never know. Klitschko has laid waste to everyone who has crossed his path since 2006 but has never faced anyone resembling a great heavyweight. The only glimpse we got of any Klitschko against a truly fine fighter was when Vitali Klitschko lost to Lennox Lewis as the result of a cut in 2003, Lewis' last fight. Wladimir's best opponents might've been Ray Mercer and Chris Byrd, two fighters who don't exactly make for a sterling resume. And I don't believe there are any great heavyweights on the immediate horizon. Deontay Wilder is intriguing but unproven. Anthony Joshua probably won't develop quickly enough to face Klitschko. The best option might be Bermane Stiverne, another decent fighter who is hardly inspiring. Odds are that Klitschko, 38, will retire without ever facing an opponent near his current level, which means we'll always wonder how good he truly was.

WORSE

I hate all the talk about a Manny Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather Jr. fight. It's akin to the boy who cried wolf; I've heard it so many times that I summarily dismiss it. I've said all along that I won't be surprised if the fight happens. The obscene amount of money on the table has a way of motivating people, particularly those nearing the ends of their careers. Of course, I'll watch it if it happens. I wish they'd fought a few years ago but they remain very good fighters who would put on a fascinating show. It would be good for boxing. The amount of attention focused on the sport would be unprecedented given the anticipation, bad blood and 24/7 news cycle. And, finally, all pay-per-view and income records would be smashed. In other words, the fight would go where no fight has gone before. I'm just tired of the endless speculation, the rumors that seem to portend a big announcement and those that seem to quash any possibility it will happen. If it happens, great. If it doesn't, fine. Let's talk about it when a final decision has been made.

NORTON JR.: JONATHAN DANIEL /ALLSPORT; HAGLER: THE RING MAGAZINE; GOLOVKIN: ALEXIS CUAREZMA/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

JERMALL CHARLO

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER

MUSIC: "I like hip-hop music. I like all music really. I feel music is art, just like boxing." ★ **CAR:** "I drive a BMW. My dream car is a Bugatti or Ferrari." ★ **FOOD:** "It's My Fit Food. It's a pre-packaged food we have in Texas. It's weighed out, it's delicious, it's everything a fighter needs." ★ **TATTOOS:** "I have a ferocious lion that marks my life style. I have pretty much a sleeve. My favorite tattoos are the ones on my wrist that match my brother's. It's a pair of boxing gloves." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING:** "Patrick Willis, the linebacker for the San Francisco 49ers." ★ **MOVIE:** "That's a good one. It is probably '300.'" ★ **VIDEO GAME:** "'Call of Duty.'"

DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

WBO JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

MUSIC: "I like listening to AraabMuzik. It's by a friend of mine from Providence." ★ **CAR:** "I'm driving an Infiniti but someday I hope to have a Maybach." ★ **FOOD:** "Cape Verdean dishes." ★ **TATTOOS:** "I have 'Olympic Trials 2008' and a few smaller ones on my hands." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING:** "Good question because I don't really watch sports outside of boxing right now. I'd have to say Michael Jordan." ★ **MOVIE:** "'Four Brothers.'" ★ **VIDEO GAME:** "'Call Of Duty.'"

JULIAN WILLIAMS

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT PROSPECT

MUSIC: "I'm a big Drake and Jay-Z fan." ★ **CAR:** "I drive a Cadillac. I love Cadillacs. My dream car would be a Bentley." ★ **FOOD:** "Steak and pasta." ★ **TATTOOS:** I've got one tattoo on my arm. It's a boxing glove." ★ **ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING:** "I would say LeSean McCoy, the running back for the Philadelphia Eagles." ★ **MOVIE:** "'Dead Presidents.'" ★ **VIDEO GAME:** "I don't really play video games but I would say 'Madden.'"

— Anson Wainwright

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

Sergey Kovalev's shutout victory over Bernard Hopkins generated talk of another compelling light heavyweight matchup. We asked: **What would be the result of a fight between Sergey Kovalev and Adonis Stevenson?** Consensus was that Stevenson could be in trouble. Here is how you voted.

THE PERCENTAGES:

KOVALEV BY KO
90.34

KOVALEV BY DECISION
4.53

STEVENSON BY KO
3.61

STEVENSON BY DECISION
1.17

DRAW
0.35

Note: 10,001 readers voted

By **David Greisman**

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT

THE VERSION OF **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** WHO KNOCKED OUT KUBRAT PULEV WAS OVERDUE

Wladimir Klitschko demonstrated against Kubrat Pulev that he can be an entertaining fighter.

At long last, Wladimir Klitschko has been in a fight that didn't stink against a fighter who didn't suck. Oh, and he won, defeating Kubrat Pulev by fifth-round technical knockout on Nov. 15.

Logic dictated that if we were to witness that rare satisfying Klitschko outing, any enjoyment would come at his expense. We'd finally see the cracks in his chin get cracked just right again and we'd see the reign of the most dominant heavyweight of the past decade end with him collapsed on the canvas.

That's where he was when Corrie Sanders knocked him out in 2003. That's where he was when he fell apart from exhaustion against Lamon Brewster in 2004. That's even where he was three times against Samuel Peter in 2005, though at least he held on (often literally) for the victory that night.

That's when he transitioned into a jabbing and grabbing machine, punishing his opponents and his viewers alike. And he apparently didn't see anything wrong with that.

This was what he needed to do to preserve himself against a certain caliber of challenger and it worked. He became so good at making so many good fighters look so bad. And when he ran out of quality opponents, he made lesser heavyweights look like rank amateurs in pathetic matchups.

It's boring to watch one boxer dominate another so effortlessly. There was no flash, just flatlining until the expected flattening.

What hurt us didn't hurt him, though. Klitschko kept winning and kept attracting large crowds and great ratings overseas. And he ended up with beautiful actress Hayden Panettiere, giving us yet another reason to hate him.

Except he's likable outside of the ring. And he finally gave us something good within it too.

Klitschko-Pulev wasn't overly entertaining but it also wasn't overly foul, nor overly foul-filled. There was some clinching and not enough punching overall but we've seen far worse, which is what made this far better.

This time, what we saw was a patient Klitschko standing in front of Pulev, standing up to Pulev's shots and then acting offended when Pulev touched him. Wladimir used to get hit and get nervous. Against Pulev, he got hit, got angry and then got even. The knockdowns he scored came off some huge hooks and one right hand looked as if it should've taken Pulev's head off.

Klitschko's detestable style over these past 9½ years ensured victories. He can be a lot more than that if he remains this vicious. Or he could get knocked out in the process. I'd like to see him find a happy medium. Klitschko is far from the first boring heavyweight; John Ruiz is not yet a distant-enough memory. Nor is he the first big man or even the only boxer to employ questionable tactics. If you recall, Muhammad Ali pulled down on Joe Frazier's head.

Klitschko will be in the Hall of Fame no matter what. The thing about legacies, though, is that history records whom you beat while memory reminds us of how. Klitschko has become an important champion. He still has time to become a memorable one. »

The ball is in the court of Adonis Stevenson now that Sergey Kovalev (left) dispatched Bernard Hopkins.

★

Sergey Kovalev's shutout decision over Bernard Hopkins on Nov. 8 proved three things: that Kovalev truly is one of the top 175-pounders in the world if not better than RING champion Adonis Stevenson, that Hopkins may have been a deserving No. 3 but was nevertheless a distant No. 3, and that the fighters Hopkins beat to get there are even worse than we thought they were.

Hopkins' campaign to regain the undisputed championship began with a lower tier of beltholders. Guys like Tavoris Cloud and Beibut Shumenov are proof that a world title doesn't make you world class. Their lack of top-level experience, lack of top-level skill and athleticism, and lack of top-level ring intelligence left them dumbfounded by Hopkins' use of body positioning, distance, timing and dirty tricks.

Those wins got Hopkins two belts (he also beat Karo Murat in between). By mid-2014, he had his pick of two opponents: He could face Adonis Stevenson, who'd knocked out Chad Dawson to win the RING belt, or Kovalev.

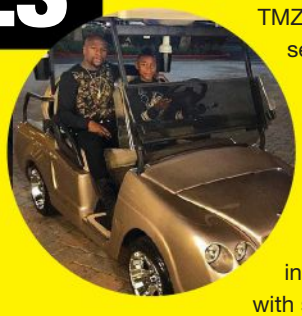
Stevenson-Hopkins might've gone differently. We'll never know. And Stevenson will end 2014 having refused to face Kovalev and having lost out on a chance to face Hopkins. His move to Al Haymon and Showtime could still pay off financially if he faces fellow Quebec-based star Jean Pascal next year but for now whatever goodwill and respect Stevenson earned in 2013 was squandered in 2014.

Kovalev came in with a great game plan, knocked Hopkins down early, rocked him on several occasions, never fell into the style of fighting that works in Hopkins' favor and left Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City with a huge win, attaining the stardom that had eluded him in lieu of a Stevenson fight.

The onus is now on Stevenson to prove himself. Right now his reign as king at 175 is being challenged by a man who is willing to seize power and looks able to do it. Stevenson calls himself "Superman" but the only way he has backed up that nickname is by taking flight.

MAYWEATHER: INSTAGRAM; KOVALEV: JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

UGLY DETAILS



Following the banishment of NFL player **Ray Rice** in September, **Floyd Mayweather Jr.** made some alarming comments about domestic violence. An interview with Josie Harris in mid-November did little to quell concern.

Harris, who was the ex-companion at the center of a 2010 case that ultimately sent Mayweather to jail for two months, told USA Today that she'd been physically abused by the fighter on "six occasions" and described the night on which Mayweather allegedly dragged her by the hair from her bed and beat her while two of their kids watched.

Mayweather continues to deny those allegations and some pointed to Harris' forthcoming book as motivation for the interview. However, the story also included original police statements from the children: **Koraun**, who was 10 at the time and was responsible for calling the police, and his brother **Zion**, who was 9. Both describe Mayweather's attack. In the words of Zion: "He was punching her in the head and he was stomping on her sholder (sic)."

The interview was released two days after Mayweather had posted a father/son photo of the gold Bentley golf cart he'd bought Koraun for his birthday. Asked about his dad not admitting to the attack on his mother, the 15-year-old told USA Today, "He is a coward."

On the same day the Harris interview hit the net, Mayweather dropped a new video on Instagram of himself in a Los Angeles hotel suite with 10 strippers cherry-picked from a local club. With Ca$h Out's "She Twerkin" playing in the background, the video showed Mayweather bedecked in boxer shorts and belly-down on a massage table casually observing the wall o' booty, for which he reportedly paid $30,000.

According to a report by TMZ earlier in November, several strip clubs in Las Vegas had recently been told by the city's vice squad to not let Mayweather through their doors because he "does inappropriate things with some of the women."

The report also revealed that Las Vegas strip club owners see nothing at all inappropriate about Mayweather reupholstering their lounges with cash and that they would be ignoring that particular suggestion from the police.

Promoter **Don King** suffered a serious head injury after falling outside a Cleveland restaurant around Halloween, requiring seven stitches and seven days in the hospital. At home, just after being released, King said, "I still don't know what happened. I just remember a lot of blood coming from my head." He was scheduled to undergo more tests to determine the reason for the fall.

Foot Locker released a commercial in which a couple of guys in a gym are talking about an upcoming shoe sale and one says to the other: "The people wanted it, Foot Locker made it happen." That bit is overheard by a stunned **Manny Pacquiao**, who without mentioning any names starts yelling, "He's going to fight me! He's going to fight me!"

Mickey Rourke, 62, announced that he would return to the ring in Russia on Nov. 28. That was after our date with the printer but he was set to face a middleweight named Elliot Seymour (1-9, 1 KO), who was born the year before audiences witnessed Rourke's ice cube skills in "9½ Weeks." Rourke, 6-0-2 with four knockouts as a pro, last fought in 1994 as a super middleweight.

Jermain Taylor was officially charged on Nov. 19 with first-degree battery and first-degree terroristic threatening for an incident last August in Little Rock, Arkansas, that left his cousin with five bullet holes below the waist. The cousin survived but a conviction for Taylor could mean up to 26 years in prison.

James Kirkland was arrested on Oct. 29 on suspicion of assault with injury involving "family violence," according to a Travis County (Texas) Sheriff's Office spokesperson. The incident allegedly occurred on Oct. 17. No further details were available. Kirkland has been in and out of jail for various offenses.

Muhammad Ali's doctor, **Abraham Lieberman**, responded to public concern over the health of his patient by telling the BBC in early November that The Greatest is "doing OK" for a 72-year-old with advanced Parkinson's. Asked whether Ali's boxing career had an influence on his present condition, Lieberman somewhat surprisingly said, "I don't know. It may have."

In South Africa, junior middleweight **Phindile Mwelase** died at the age of 31 on Oct. 25. She was knocked out on Oct. 10 by Liz Butler and went into a coma.

And in Orlando, Florida, 26-year-old junior lightweight **Christopher Lopez** was arrested on Nov. 2 and charged with attempted murder after stabbing his father. Lopez's mother told police that "her son's behavior changed drastically" after receiving a concussion during a fight in August, according to the Orlando Sentinel. This came on the heels of a report stating that the brain of **Jovan Belcher**, the Kansas City Chiefs linebacker who murdered his girlfriend before killing himself in 2012, showed evidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, which is known to cause erratic behavior.

Corona Extra

BOXING

ACHIEVING GREATNESS *takes* SOMETHING EXTRA.

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Bernard Hopkins said the feint is a way of making "your opponent gun-shy."

FEINTING

'THE PURPOSE OF THE FEINT IS TO GET YOUR GUY TO COME IN CLOSER'

Good boxing demands good technique. A missed step here, an off-balance shot there, and you could be looking up from the canvas. The sport is as much about foot positioning as it is punching power. It's a ballet of fists and feet, of the whole body functioning as one. To achieve that, one must master the fundamentals.

Perhaps no one today has a better understanding of the basics than future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, which is why we asked him to play the leading role in "Perfect Execution."

Each month in THE RING Magazine, Hopkins will demonstrate a particular skill and explain how to execute it. Photographs of Hopkins and assistant Maleek Jackson will help you understand the moves.

Also, for the first time, we will have an accompanying video on our website, RingTV.com, which will allow you to watch and listen as Hopkins imparts his wisdom.

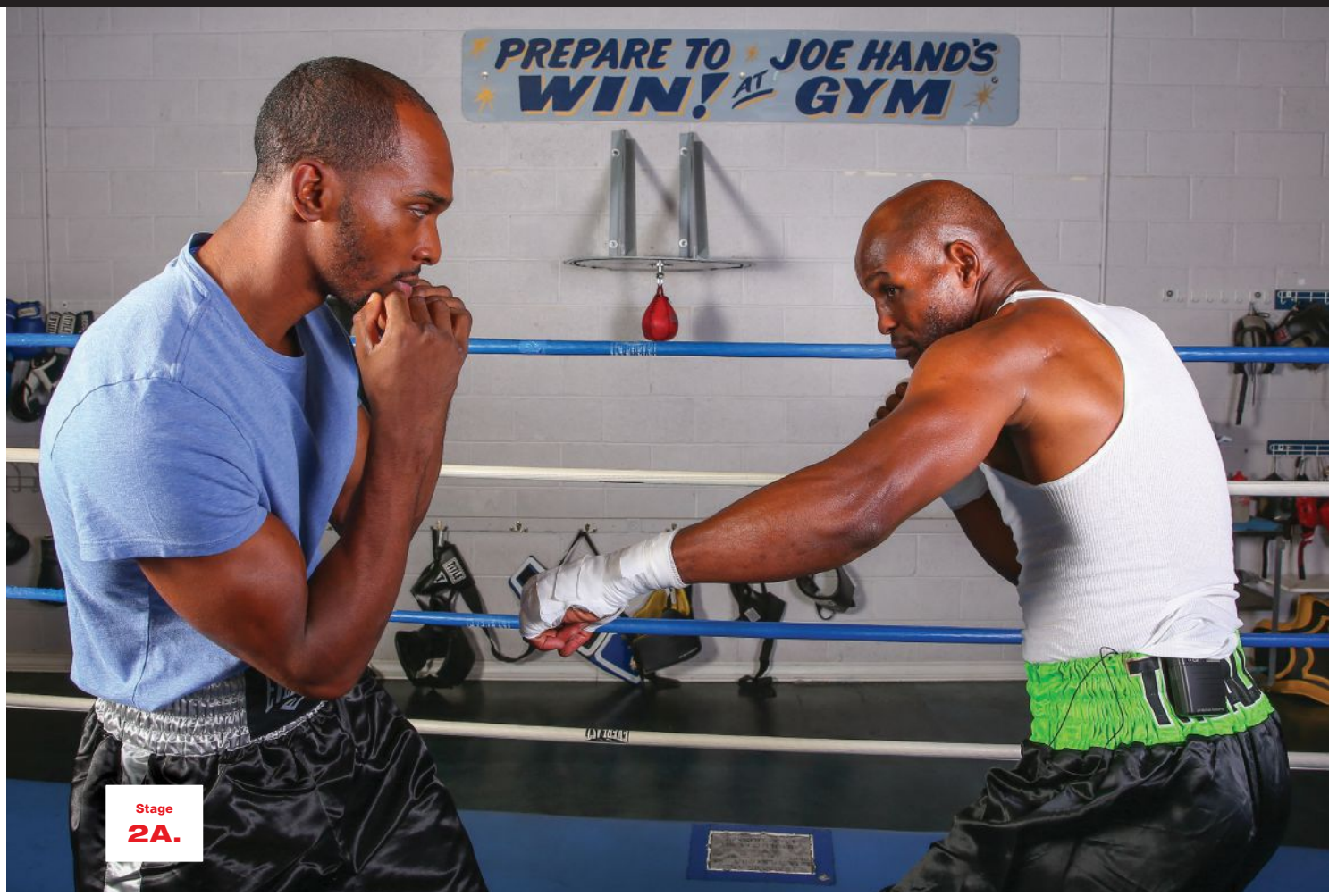
This month: feints. "The purpose of the feint is to get your guy to come in closer by using a move that he thinks you're moving in with. Everything has to work with the feint – your footwork, head and shoulder movement, and the appearance that you're attacking him when you want him to come to you. You have to make your opponent gun-shy. You can do it with feints because they don't know when you're going to touch them and when you're not. Maleek Jackson and I will show you." »

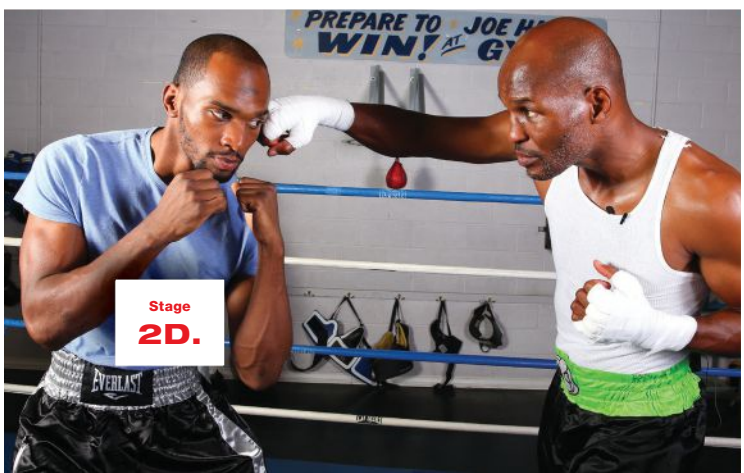
ED MULHOLLAND

Stage 1. On the street we used to do this, where you keep your left hand down A, trying to egg Maleek to come forward, because he thinks he has an opening. My lead leg is bent and I'm distracting him with my hand down. I call this "The Bow" because I'm bent forward B and I'm creeping on him. As Maleek gets closer, this puts him in a position for me to hit him C.

Stage 2. This is a tag feint. I'm acting like I'm coming but I'm not. I fake a left jab to the body A and he's going to react to me. I pull back and I go up top B because he thinks now that I'm retreating. My feint has created a punching range when he's coming to me C, which is where I want him so I can go at him with a right to the top D.

ED MULHOLLAND





VIDEO

Bernard Hopkins' popular how-to series on boxing fundamentals appears each month in THE RING. The feature includes a video component. To watch and listen to Hopkins giving instruction, just scan the QR code at left or go to http://bit.ly/perfect-execution-feint.

Stage
3A.

Stage
3B.

ED MULHOLLAND

Stage 3C.

Stage 3D.

Stage 3. Here I try to lure him again with my left hand down A and he thinks I'm being lazy. He's going to sneak me and he gets closer B. This again leaves him vulnerable looking at me. As he gets closer, this is where I sneak him and land a right up top C and D. You have to build a pattern and make your opponent conscious of certain things and changing those things. Feints are a big key towards that.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

SERGEY KOVALEV

By **Michael Rosenthal**

JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sergey Kovalev handed Bernard Hopkins the worst loss of his career.

The fact Sergey Kovalev defeated Bernard Hopkins on Nov. 8 was no great surprise. The way he did it was.

The talk before the fight centered on Krusher's crushing power, which had accounted for 23 knockouts in his previous 26 fights. His ability to hurt people played a secondary role against Hopkins, though: He won by outboxing a boxing wizard.

Kovalev drew from his vast amateur background and five-plus years as a pro to pick apart Hopkins rather than overwhelm him to win a shutout decision, the worst loss in Hopkins' career. The Russian landed hard punches but was never reckless, which gave the slower, weaker Hopkins little chance of doing damage. Hopkins landed only 5.4 punches per round.

Kovalev (26-0-1, 23 knockouts) put Hopkins down with a short right in the first round and pounded him mercilessly in 12th, a round Hopkins was fortunate to survive. Make no mistake, though: The victory was more the product of cunning than punching power.

Kovalev's only failure was his inability to become the first to stop Hopkins, which would've made a stronger statement in his bid to become a marquee attraction. That was as much the result of Hopkins' defensive skills and solid chin as any deficiency on Kovalev's part, though. In the end, Kovalev did what he came to do: He dominated a legend.

He also served notice to other light heavyweights. Kovalev's punching power was obvious going into the fight. Now it's more clear than ever that he's a complete fighting machine. Scary. RING

POUND FOR POUND: Wladimir Klitschko (No. 3 last month) and Manny Pacquiao (No. 4) each showed their top-tier credentials with impressive wins and climbed above Andre Ward, who has been out of action for over a year. Klitschko and Pacquiao were elevated one spot each while Ward slipped from No. 2 to No. 4. Flyweight Roman Gonzalez (No. 9 last month) turned in another dominating performance, this time a sixth-round knockout of Rocky Fuentes (unrated), and jumped over Carl Froch and Guillermo Rigondeaux into the No. 7 slot.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Tomasz Adamek finally slipped out of the ratings after a unanimous-decision loss to unrated Artur Szpilka; he was replaced at No. 10 by Uzbekistani Ruslan Chagaev. Klitschko's grasp on the heavyweight crown tightened with an entertaining fifth-round knockout of Kubrat Pulev (No. 1 last month). Pulev fell to No. 3, thus lifting Alexander Povetkin and Bermane Stiverne to Nos. 1 and 2, respectively.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Undefeated Eleider Alvarez (No. 7 last month) stopped previously unbeaten Ryno Liebenberg (unrated) in seven rounds and switched places with No. 6-rated Isaac Chilemba. Two weeks later, Sergey Kovalev (No. 2 last month) defeated Bernard Hopkins (No. 1 at the time) by a shutout decision to unify three titles. The Russian stomped into the position below champion Adonis Stevenson and left No. 2 for The Alien.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No. 9 Thomas Oosthuizen was dropped from the list and No. 10 Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. was elevated one spot. That made room for career 160-pounder Felix Sturm to enter at No. 10 after a draw against Robert Stieglitz, who held his position at No. 3. George Groves (No. 4 last month) and James DeGale (No. 5) then scored wins over respective opponents Denis Douglin and Marco Antonio Periban (both unrated) and jumped over Stieglitz into the Nos. 3 and 4 slots.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Jessie Vargas rose from No. 8 to No. 7 after he outpointed former lightweight titleholder Antonio DeMarco (unrated).

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Sharif Bogere (unrated last month) beat Fernando Garcia (also unrated) to notch a third win since his only loss – a decision against No. 4 Richar Abril in March 2013 – and knocked Kevin Mitchell out of the No. 10 spot.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Unbeaten Dominican Javier Fortuna (unrated last month) got up from a second-round knockdown to stop Abner Cotto (unrated) in the fifth round. As a result, Fortuna took the No. 10 position from Adrian Estrella.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Vasyl Lomachenko (No. 5 last month) injured his hand but even with one good arm he was too much for unrated Thai veteran Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo, who lost all 12 rounds on the cards. Lomachenko climbed to No. 4.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Cristian Mijares (No. 5 last month) has been fighting at 126 pounds so he was dropped and Japanese southpaw Shingo Wake came in at No. 10.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Undefeated Californian Randy Caballero replaced Julio Ceja at No. 10 after winning the vacant IBF title with a unanimous decision over Stuart Hall (unrated). Tomoki Kameda rose from No. 9 to No. 8, switching spots with Jamie McDonnell, after a split-decision victory over unrated Alejandro Hernandez in Chicago.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: Moruti Mthalane (No. 5 last month) beat unrated Odilon Zaleta by a unanimous decision but the performance wasn't impressive enough to stop the rise of Amnat Ruenroeng, who took the No. 5 spot and dropped Mthalane to No. 6. Milan Melindo (No. 7 last month) then outpointed Saul Juarez (unrated) in an IBF eliminator at 108 pounds so he was dropped. Undefeated Thai fighter Nawaphon Por Chokchai took the bottom vacancy after Nos. 8-10 moved up to fill the gap.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Melindo entered the ratings at No. 8 after he beat Juarez, thus pushing Javier Mendoza (No. 10 last month) off the list.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Another talented Japanese fighter with fewer than 10 pro fights hit the list in the form of Kosei Tanaka, who, in his fourth outing, stopped Ryuji Hara (No. 9 last month) in the 10th round. Tanaka entered the ratings at No. 4 and Hara held steady on the strength of his performance. However, since everybody was pushed down by Tanaka's arrival, Hara dropped to No. 10 and Jesus Silvestre (No. 10 last month) was bumped off the list. Two more spaces opened up after Francisco Rodriguez (No. 2 last month) moved up in weight and Merlito Sabillo (No. 8) lost by fourth-round stoppage to unrated junior flyweight Faris Nenggo. After the remainders moved up, No. 9 was taken by China's Xiong Zhao Zhong and No. 10 by Filipino Denver Cuello.

No. 7 heavyweight Vyacheslav Glazkov (right) put Darnell Wilson away in seven rounds on Nov. 8.

DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
497 • Ukraine • 63-3-0 (53 KOs)

1. ALEXANDER POVETKIN
371 • Russia • 28-1-0 (20 KOs)

2. BERMANE STIVERNE
83 • Canada • 24-1-1 (21 KOs)

3. KUBRAT PULEV
163 • Bulgaria • 20-1-0 (11 KOs)

4. TYSON FURY
145 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)

5. BRYANT JENNINGS
36 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)

6. DEONTAY WILDER
53 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (32 KOs)

7. VYACHESLAV GLAZKOV
37 • Ukraine • 19-0-1 (12 KOs)

8. MIKE PEREZ
25 • Cuba • 20-1-1 (12 KOs)

9. CHRIS ARREOLA
64 • U.S. • 35-4-0 (31 KOs)

10. RUSLAN CHAGAEV
3 • Uzbek. • 33-2-1 (20 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ
165 • Cuba • 29-1-0 (14 KOs)

1. MARCO HUCK
142 • Germany • 38-2-1 (26 KOs)

2. GRIGORY DROZD
60 • Russia • 39-1-0 (27 KOs)

3. DENIS LEBEDEV
252 • Russia • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)

4. KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK
494 • Poland • 49-3-1 (35 KOs)

5. OLA AFOLABI
299 • U.K. • 21-3-4 (10 KOs)

6. FIRAT ARSLAN
108 • Germany • 34-8-2 (21 KOs)

7. ILUNGA MAKABU
72 • Congo • 17-1-0 (16 KOs)

8. THABISO MCHUNU
58 • S. Africa • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)

9. YOURI KALENGA
23 • Congo • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)

10. RAKHIM CHAKHKIEV
18 • Russia • 20-1-0 (15 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C ADONIS STEVENSON
77 • Canada • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

1. SERGEY KOVALEV
97 • Russia • 26-0-1 (23 KOs)

2. BERNARD HOPKINS
443 • U.S. • 55-7-2 (32 KOs)

3. JEAN PASCAL
72 • Canada • 29-2-1 (17 KOs)

4. JUERGEN BRAEHMER
126 • Germany • 44-2-0 (32 KOs)

5. BEIBUT SHUMENOV
50 • Kaz. • 14-2-0 (9 KOs)

6. ELEIDER ALVAREZ
37 • Colombia • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

7. ISAAC CHILEMBA
135 • Malawi • 23-2-2 (10 KOs)

8. ANDRZEJ FONFARA
28 • Poland • 26-3-0 (15 KOs)

9. NADJIB MOHAMMEDI
9 • France • 36-3-0 (22 KOs)

10. GABRIEL CAMPILLO
8 • Spain • 24-6-1 (11 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C ANDRE WARD
290 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (14 KOs)

1. CARL FROCH
443 • U.K. • 33-2-0 (24 KOs)

2. ARTHUR ABRAHAM
268 • Armenia • 41-4-0 (28 KOs)

3. GEORGE GROVES
155 • U.K. • 21-2-0 (16 KOs)

4. JAMES DEGALE
77 • U.K. • 20-1-0 (14 KOs)

5. ROBERT STIEGLITZ
276 • Russia • 47-4-1 (27 KOs)

6. ANTHONY DIRRELL
15 • U.S. • 27-0-1 (22 KOs)

7. GILBERTO RAMIREZ
19 • Mexico • 30-0-0 (24 KOs)

8. ANDRE DIRRELL
13 • U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

9. JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR.
6 • Mexico • 48-1-1 (32 KOs)

10. FELIX STURM
3 • Germany • 39-4-3 (18 KOs)

THE RING RATINGS

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

- **C MIGUEL COTTO**
  25 • P.R. • 39-4-0 (32 KOs)
- **1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
  155 • Kaz. • 31-0-0 (28 KOs)
- **2. PETER QUILLIN**
  130 • U.S. • 31-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3. SERGIO MARTINEZ**
  242 • Argentina • 51-3-2 (28 KOs)
- **4. DANIEL GEALE**
  285 • Australia • 30-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5. HASSAN N'DAM**
  45 • Cameroon • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **6. MARTIN MURRAY**
  156 • U.K. • 29-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **7. MATT KOROBOV**
  9 • Russia • 24-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **8. JERMAIN TAYLOR**
  7 • U.S. • 33-4-1 (20 KOs)
- **9. SAM SOLIMAN**
  26 • Australia • 44-12-0 (18 KOs)
- **10. DANIEL JACOBS**
  6 • U.S. • 28-1-0 (25 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

- **C FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
  134 • U.S. • 47-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **1. CANELO ALVAREZ**
  211 • Mexico • 44-1-1 (31 KOs)
- **2. ERISLANDY LARA**
  178 • Cuba • 19-2-2 (12 KOs)
- **3. AUSTIN TROUT**
  130 • U.S. • 27-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE**
  85 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5. VANES MARTIROSYAN**
  260 • U.S. • 35-1-1 (21 KOs)
- **6. JERMELL CHARLO**
  55 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **7. ISHE SMITH**
  92 • U.S. • 26-6-0 (12 KOs)
- **8. JERMALL CHARLO**
  24 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9. CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE**
  7 • U.S. • 34-5-0 (19 KOs)
- **10. CARLOS MOLINA**
  178 • Mexico • 22-6-2 (6 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

- **C FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
  167 • U.S. • 47-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **1. MANNY PACQUIAO**
  264 • Phil. • 57-5-2 (38 KOs)
- **2. TIM BRADLEY**
  129 • U.S. • 31-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **3. JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
  103 • Mexico • 56-7-1 (40 KOs)
- **4. KELL BROOK**
  188 • U.K. • 33-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **5. MARCOS MAIDANA**
  50 • Argentina • 35-5-0 (31 KOs)
- **6. SHAWN PORTER**
  51 • U.S. • 24-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **7. KEITH THURMAN**
  90 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **8. ROBERT GUERRERO**
  122 • U.S. • 32-2-1 (18 KOs)
- **9. AMIR KHAN**
  30 • U.K. • 29-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **10. DEVON ALEXANDER**
  23 • U.S. • 26-2-0 (14 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

- **C DANNY GARCIA**
  190 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **1. LUCAS MATTHYSSE**
  190 • Argentina • 36-3-0 (34 KOs)
- **2. LAMONT PETERSON**
  92 • U.S. • 33-2-1 (17 KOs)
- **3. CHRIS ALGIERI**
  24 • U.S. • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)
- **4. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV**
  103 • Russia • 23-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **5. MIKE ALVARADO**
  169 • U.S. • 34-3-0 (23 KOs)
- **6. ADRIEN BRONER**
  30 • U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **7. JESSIE VARGAS**
  33 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **8. ZAB JUDAH**
  196 • U.S. • 42-9-0 (29 KOs)
- **9. VIKTOR POSTOL**
  67 • Ukraine • 26-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **10. KHABIB ALLAKHVERDIEV**
  126 • Russia • 19-1-0 (9 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1. TERENCE CRAWFORD**
  74 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2. RAYMUNDO BELTRAN**
  122 • Mexico • 29-6-1 (17 KOs)
- **3. OMAR FIGUEROA**
  46 • U.S. • 24-0-1 (18 KOs)
- **4. RICHAR ABRIL**
  10 • Cuba • 19-3-1 (8 KOs)
- **5. MICKEY BEY**
  11 • U.S. • 21-1-1 (10 KOs)
- **6. MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
  225 • Mexico • 34-4-0 (13 KOs)
- **7. JUAN DIAZ**
  43 • U.S. • 40-4-0 (19 KOs)
- **8. DANIEL ESTRADA**
  101 • Mexico • 32-3-1 (24 KOs)
- **9. JORGE LINARES**
  38 • Venezuela • 37-3-0 (24 KOs)
- **10. SHARIF BOGERE**
  4 • Uganda • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
  256 • Japan • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **2. RANCES BARTHELEMY**
  47 • Cuba • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3. TAKASHI MIURA**
  86 • Japan • 28-2-2 (21 KOs)
- **4. JUAN CARLOS BURGOS**
  159 • Mexico • 30-2-2 (20 KOs)
- **5. ROMAN MARTINEZ**
  325 • P.R. • 27-2-2 (16 KOs)
- **6. DIEGO MAGDALENO**
  183 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **7. SERGIO THOMPSON**
  38 • Mexico • 30-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **8. FRANCISCO VARGAS**
  20 • Mexico • 20-0-1 (14 KOs)
- **9. ORLANDO SALIDO**
  10 • Mexico • 42-12 -2 (29 KOs)
- **10. JAVIER FORTUNA**
  4 • Dom. Rep. • 26-0-1 (19 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1. JHONNY GONZALEZ**
  191 • Mexico • 57-8-0 (48 KOs)
- **2. NICHOLAS WALTERS**
  103 • Jamaica • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **3. ABNER MARES**
  82 • Mexico • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **4. VASYL LOMACHENKO**
  30 • Ukraine • 3-1-0 (1 KO)*
- **5. EVGENY GRADOVICH**
  91 • Russia • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **6. NONITO DONAIRE**
  48 • Phil. • 33-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **7. SIMPIWE VETYEKA**
  51 • S. Africa • 26-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **8. LEE SELBY**
  37 • U.K. • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)
- **9. JESUS CUELLAR**
  7 • Argentina • 25-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **10. MARVIN SONSONA**
  21 • Phil. • 19-1-1 (15 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

- **C GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  212 • Cuba • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1. CARL FRAMPTON**
  114 • U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **2. LEO SANTA CRUZ**
  82 • U.S. • 28-0-1 (16 KOs)
- **3. SCOTT QUIGG**
  105 • U.K. • 30-0-2 (22 KOs)
- **4. KIKO MARTINEZ**
  67 • Spain • 31-5-0 (23 KOs)
- **5. JEFFREY MATHEBULA**
  140 • S. Africa • 27-5-2 (14 KOs)
- **6. GENESIS SERVANIA**
  37 • Phil. • 25-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **7. CHRIS AVALOS**
  26 • U.S. • 25-2-0 (19 KOs)
- **8. KID GALAHAD**
  15 • U.K. • 18-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9. ANDRES GUTIERREZ**
  10 • Mexico • 31-0-1 (22 KOs)
- **10. SHINGO WAKE**
  1 • Japan • 17-4-2 (10 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another; 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders chose not to fight one another and either of them fights No. 3, No. 4 or No. 5, the winner may be awarded THE RING belt if the Editorial Board deems the contenders worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Ratings Chairman Chuck Giampa considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world but has final say on all changes. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

**** The record shown for Vasyl Lomachenko is the one listed by boxrec.com. However, Lomachenko was paid to participate in the World Series of Boxing six times during 2013, with a record of 6-0.***

RATINGS

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
160 • Japan • 22-0-2 (16 KOs)
2. **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
9 • Dom. Rep. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
3. **ANSELMO MORENO**
348 • Panama • 35-3-1 (12 KOs)
4. **KOKI KAMEDA**
206 • Japan • 33-1-0 (18 KOs)
5. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
201 • Phil. • 35-3-3 (20 KOs)
6. **HUGO RUIZ**
136 • Mexico • 35-2-0 (31 KOs)
7. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
88 • Ghana • 29-5-0 (22 KOs)
8. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
69 • Japan • 31-0-0 (19 KOs)
9. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
82 • U.K. • 25-2-1 (12 KOs)
10. **RANDY CABALLERO**
5 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
238 • Argentina • 43-1-2 (23 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
133 • Mexico • 31-0-1 (25 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
82 • Thailand • 29-4-1 (26 KOs)
4. **ZOLANI TETE**
52 • S. Africa • 19-3-0 (16 KOs)
5. **JUAN CARLOS SANCHEZ JR.**
146 • Mexico • 19-3-1 (9 KOs)
6. **ARTHUR VILLANUEVA**
84 • Phil. • 26-0-0 (14 KOs)
7. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
113 • Thailand • 55-1-1 (21 KOs)
8. **FELIPE ORUCUTA**
79 • Mexico • 29-3-0 (24 KOs)
9. **MCJOE ARROYO**
24 • P.R. • 15-0-0 (8 KOs)
10. **KOHEI KONO**
30 • Japan • 30-8-0 (13 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
55 • Nicaragua • 41-0-0 (35 KOs)

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
86 • Mexico • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)
2. **BRIAN VILORIA**
177 • U.S. • 34-4-0 (20 KOs)
3. **EDGAR SOSA**
133 • Mexico • 51-8-0 (30 KOs)
4. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
165 • Argentina • 34-1-0 (18 KOs)
5. **AMNAT RUENROENG**
29 • Thailand • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)
6. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
37 • S. Africa • 31-2-0 (20 KOs)
7. **GIOVANI SEGURA**
56 • Mexico • 32-4-1 (28 KOs)
8. **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
12 • P.R. • 15-2-0 (13 KOs)
9. **KAZUTO IOKA**
10 • Japan • 15-1-0 (9 KOs)
10. **NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI**
2 • Thailand • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C DONNIE NIETES
164 • Phil. • 34-1-4 (20 KOs)

1. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
146 • Phil. • 20-2-0 (12 KOs)
2. **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
10 • Japan • 20-4-0 (10 KOs)
3. **MOISES FUENTES**
91 • Mexico • 20-2-1 (11 KOs)
4. **NAOYA INOUE**
66 • Japan • 7-0-0 (6 KOs)
5. **ADRIAN HERNANDEZ**
188 • Mexico • 30-3-1 (19 KOs)
6. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
87 • Mexico • 23-1-1 (15 KOs)
7. **FELIX ALVARADO**
89 • Nicaragua • 19-2-0 (16 KOs)
8. **MILAN MELINDO**
2 • Phil. • 32-1-0 (12 KOs)
9. **ALBERTO ROSSEL**
83 • Peru • 32-8-0 (13 KOs)
10. **RANDY PETALCORIN**
29 • Phil. • 22-1-1 (17 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
114 • S. Africa • 27-1-0 (9 KOs)
2. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
87 • Japan • 27-7-0 (10 KOs)
3. **KOSEI TANAKA**
4 • Japan • 4-0-0 (2 KOs)
4. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
180 • Thailand • 36-0-0 (12 KOs)
5. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
8 • Thailand • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)
6. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
111 • Nicaragua • 27-1-1 (16 KOs)
7. **OSWALDO NOVOA**
42 • Mexico • 14-5-1 (9 KOs)
8. **RYUJI HARA**
65 • Japan • 18-1-0 (10 KOs)
9. **XIONG ZHAO ZHONG**
2 • China • 24-6-1 (14 KOs)
10. **DENVER CUELLO**
2 • Phil. • 34-5-6 (22 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
167 • U.S. • 47-0-0 (26 KOs)
2. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
225 • Ukraine • 63-3-0 (53 KOs)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
574 • Phil. • 57-5-2 (38 KOs)
4. **ANDRE WARD**
190 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (14 KOs)
5. **TIM BRADLEY**
220 • U.S. • 31-1-0 (12 KOs)
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
403 • Mexico • 56-7-1 (40 KOs)
7. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
25 • Nicaragua • 41-0-0 (35 KOs)
8. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
66 • Cuba • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
9. **CARL FROCH**
50 • U.K. • 33-2-0 (24 KOs)
10. **CANELO ALVAREZ**
82 • Mexico • 44-1-1 (31 KOs)

THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

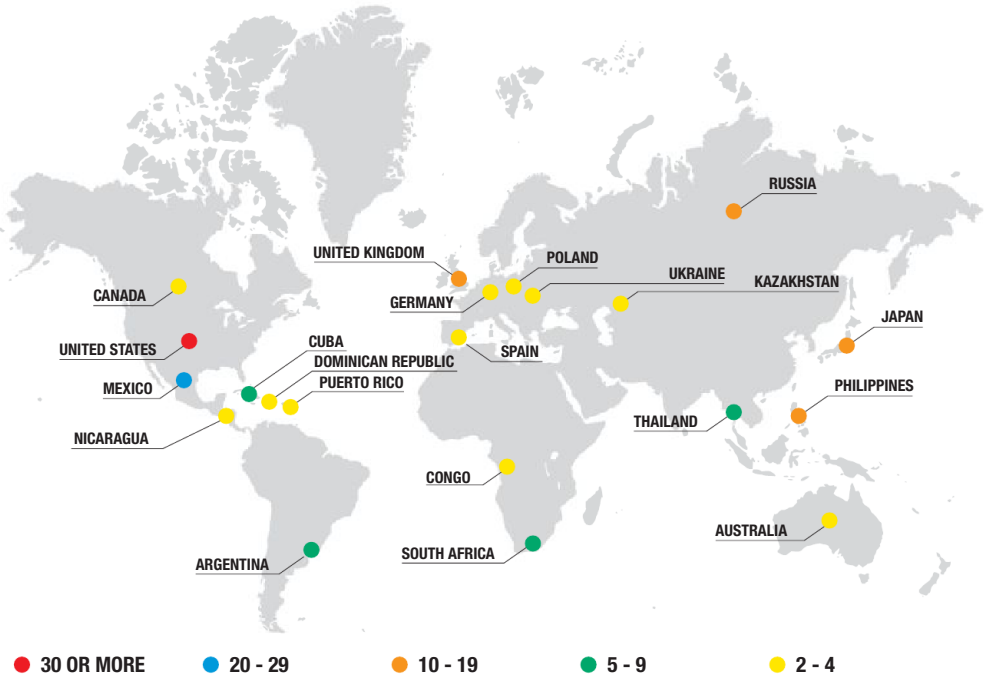
RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

●	UNITED STATES	40*	▲ 1
●	MEXICO	26	▼ 6
●	JAPAN	13	▲ 2
●	UNITED KINGDOM	13	▼ 1
●	PHILIPPINES	11	
●	RUSSIA	10	
●	ARGENTINA	6	
●	CUBA	6	
●	SOUTH AFRICA	6	▼ 1
●	THAILAND	6	▲ 1
●	GERMANY	4	▲ 1
●	PUERTO RICO	4	
●	UKRAINE	4	
●	CANADA	3	
●	NICARAGUA	3	
●	AUSTRALIA	2	
●	CONGO	2	
●	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	▲ 1
●	KAZAKHSTAN	2	
●	POLAND	2	▼ 1
●	SPAIN	2	
	ARMENIA	1	
	BULGARIA	1	
	CAMEROON	1	
	CHINA	1	
	COLOMBIA	1	
	FRANCE	1	
	GHANA	1	
	JAMAICA	1	
	MALAWI	1	
	PANAMA	1	
	PERU	1	
	UGANDA	1	
	UZBEKISTAN	1	
	VENEZUELA	1	

Countries out (from last month): *None.*

Countries in: *China (Xiong Zhao Zhong, strawweight); Uganda (Sharif Bogere, lightweight); Uzbekistan (Ruslan Chagaev, heavyweight).*

** Includes two ratings for Floyd Mayweather Jr. (junior middleweight and welterweight).*



THEN VS. NOW

The U.S. dominated boxing 10 years ago, just as it does now. However, a comparison of the American fighters rated at the end of 2004 and in this issue of the magazine reveal that the U.S. was better represented in the higher weights then and in the middle weights now. Here's a look.

DIVISION	2004	2014
HEAVYWEIGHTS	7	3
CRUISERWEIGHTS	4	0
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	4	1
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	2	3
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	5	3
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	5	8
WELTERWEIGHTS	4	6
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	4	7
LIGHTWEIGHTS	4	4
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	2	1
FEATHERWEIGHTS	2	0
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	0	2
BANTAMWEIGHTS	0	1
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	2	0
FLYWEIGHTS	1	1
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	0	0
STRAWWEIGHTS	0	0
TOTAL	46	40

Note: Five U.S. fighters who were rated in 2004 are also currently rated: Bernard Hopkins, Jermain Taylor, Zab Judah, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Brian Viloria.

DIVERSITY

The top fighters in each of the 17 weight classes are spread out across the world. Eleven countries can claim they have the top fighter in a division, whether that's champion or No. 1 where the championship is vacant. Here they are.

HEAVYWEIGHT: UKRAINE (WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO)

CRUISERWEIGHT: CUBA (YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: CANADA (ADONIS STEVENSON)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: U.S. (ANDRE WARD)

MIDDLEWEIGHT: PUERTO RICO (COTTO)

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: U.S. (FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.)

WELTERWEIGHT: U.S. (MAYWEATHER)

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: U.S. (DANNY GARCIA)

LIGHTWEIGHT: U.S. (TERENCE CRAWFORD)

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: JAPAN (TAKASHI UCHIYAMA)

FEATHERWEIGHT: MEXICO (JHONNY GONZALEZ)

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT: CUBA (GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX)

BANTAMWEIGHT: JAPAN (SHINSUKE YAMANAKA)

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT: ARGENTINA (OMAR NARVAEZ)

FLYWEIGHT: NICARAGUA (ROMAN GONZALEZ)

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT: PHILIPPINES (DONNIE NIETES)

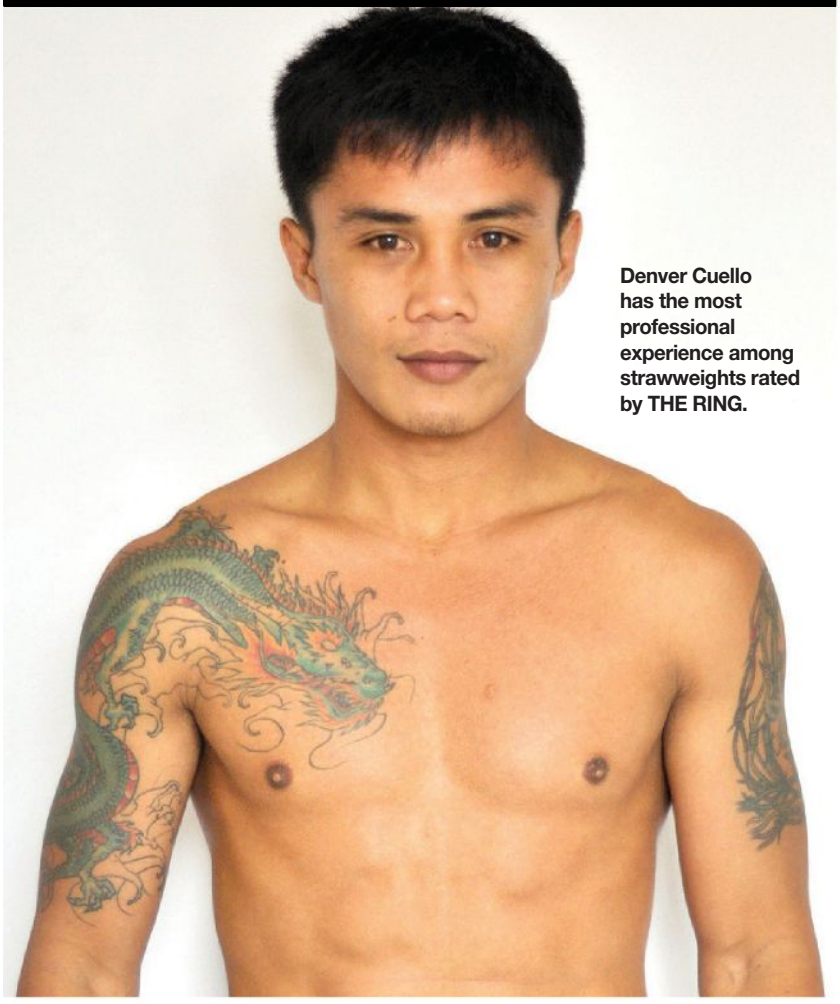
STRAWWEIGHT: SOUTH AFRICA (HEKKIE BUDLER)

PACQUIAO: XAUME OLLEROS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FOCUS ON . . .

STRAWWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 105-pounders.



Denver Cuello has the most professional experience among strawweights rated by THE RING.

MOST WEEKS RATED: WANHENG MENAYOTHIN **180**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: DENVER CUELLO, XIONG ZHAO ZHONG **2**

OLDEST: OSWALDO NOVOA **32**

YOUNGEST: KOSEI TANAKA **19**

MOST FIGHTS: CUELLO **45**

FEWEST FIGHTS: TANAKA **4**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART, MENAYOTHIN, TANAKA **100**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: NOVOA **70**

MOST KOS: CUELLO **22**

FEWEST KOS: TANAKA **2**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: MENAYOTHIN **36**

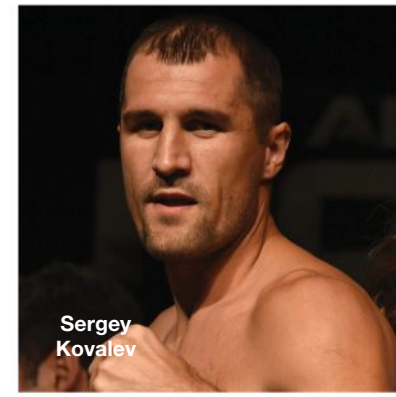
ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: NONE

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: BUDLER **(WBA)**, MENAYOTHIN **(WBC)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): JESUS SILVESTRE, EDUARDO MARTINEZ, GO ODAIRA, ALEXIS DIAZ, BYRON ROJAS.

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.



Sergey Kovalev

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

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LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: ANDRE WARD
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
LIGHTWEIGHT: TERENCE CRAWFORD
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FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

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Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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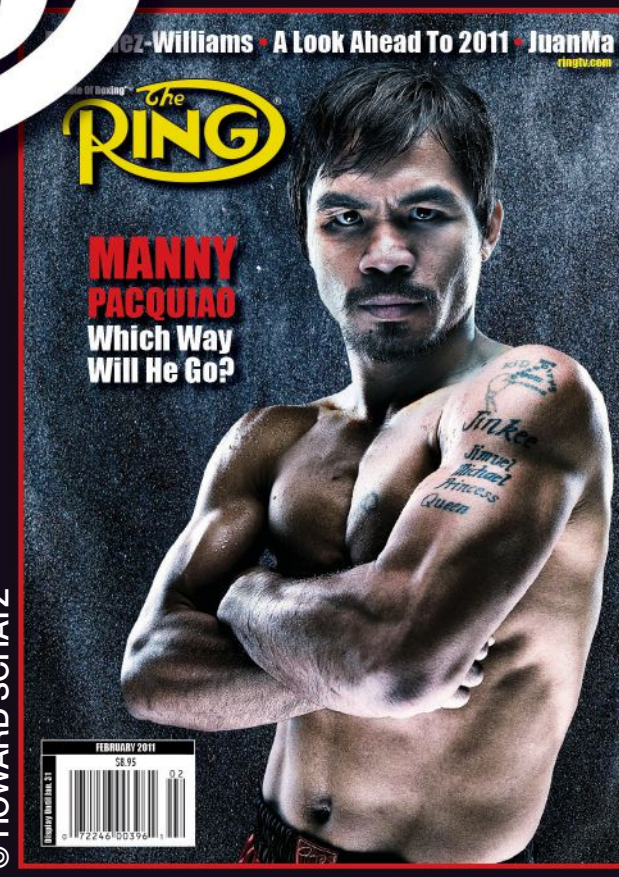

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MARCHING ON

AS **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** AND **MANNY PACQUIAO** NEAR RETIREMENT, A NUMBER OF INTRIGUING FIGURES ARE LINED UP BEHIND THEM TO DRIVE THE SPORT By **Mark Whicker**

ALVAREZ ED MULHOLLAND/GOLDEN BOY/GOLDEN BOY VIA GETTY IMAGES; GOLOVKIN: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES; THURMAN: RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

The young fighters pictured here – and many others – ensure a bright future for boxing.

It was 2007, and Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Oscar De La Hoya were meeting under the brightest lights of Las Vegas.

Afterward, somebody was supposed to turn out those lights. Sports Illustrated called it "The Last Great Fight." De La Hoya, who had carried the sport for nearly a decade, was running his final laps. Mayweather, sassy, clever and unbeaten, still wasn't considered a man of the mainstream.

De La Hoya led early, Mayweather came back late, and Mayweather won a decision. And that was that.

Except it wasn't.

Mayweather has become the best businessman in all of sports and a personage so outrageously large that the Miami Heat, with LeBron James still on the team, sat there, before one 2013 practice, to listen to his inspiration.

De La Hoya was retired by Manny Pacquiao, a jagged lightning bolt from the Philippines who grew into the 147-pound class and became a reliable pay-per-view superstar.

The epic fight between Mayweather and Pacquiao hasn't happened. Perhaps it never will. Rivalries between Showtime and HBO, Tecate and Corona, and Bob Arum and De La Hoya have frustrated fight fans, who want to see "interleague play" between the best men in the sport.

More alarmingly, Mayweather is 37, Pacquiao 36.

We're approaching the same crossroads we always have. But, somehow, the light always changes.

Who would replace Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Joe Frazier? Well, Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns and Marvin Hagler did. Who would replace them? Well, Mike Tyson did, followed by Lennox Lewis.

"Everybody gets old," Arum said.

This is not to say the torch will be passed smoothly. Thanks to

the disintegration of U.S. Olympic boxing and the farm system that it reliably provided, the new stars have a tougher time marketing themselves.

Promotional problems also rear their heads. That is nothing new, either. Roy Jones Jr. should have had much bigger fights than he had but never hooked on with the sport's master manipulators.

Now there's Andre Ward, possibly the best technician in boxing, who has never fought a main event in Las Vegas, never had a pay-per-view fight and was involved in legal battles with promoter Dan Goossen, who passed away in September.

Mikey Garcia, younger brother of renowned trainer Robert Garcia, is suing Top Rank for reasons unfathomable to most. He had the right combination of skill, thump and smile that could have put him on magazine covers. Still does, in fact.

Before Mayweather fought Marcos Maidana in September, he idly mentioned that he would retire after his six-fight contract with Showtime expired. That is two fights from now. The next day, Mayweather said, "Well, I don't know what I'll do. Maybe they'll give me a new contract. In fact, I think they will."

Stephen Espinoza runs Showtime Sports and is not eager to lose Mayweather. Like many in boxing, he is anticipating a superfight between Mayweather and Pacquiao in the spring of 2016, when a new basketball/hockey arena will open next to the MGM Grand and when Mayweather would presumably be going for his 50th victory.

"I don't believe we'll see another Floyd Mayweather," Espinoza said. "He's a singular, almost mythical figure. But the sport always adjusts. There were these questions when Oscar retired. At that point nobody really envisioned Floyd going to this stature.

"I sometimes think Floyd and his persona take up so much air in the room that other fighters get overlooked. When he does decide to

NEXT SUPERSTARS

THE RING asked 15 of its editors and contributors to list in order the five fighters they believe have the ability, charisma and connections to carry the sport after Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao are gone. We used a simple point system: 5 for a first-place vote, 4 for second, 3 for third, 2 for fourth and 1 for fifth. Here are the totals (with first place votes in parentheses) and individual lists.

65 Gennady Golovkin (9)
49 Canelo Alvarez (4)
28 Sergey Kovalev (2)
23 Keith Thurman
13 Deontay Wilder
12 Anthony Joshua
9 Andre Ward
8 Felix Verdejo
7 Adrien Broner
3 Terence Crawford
3 Danny Garcia
2 Mikey Garcia
1 Roman Gonzalez
1 Jose Ramirez
1 Nicholas Walters

RON BORGES (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Keith Thurman
4. Mikey Garcia
5. Deontay Wilder

COREY ERDMAN (CANADA)
1. Canelo Alvarez
2. Adrien Broner
3. Deontay Wilder
4. Felix Verdejo
5. Gennady Golovkin

DOUG FISCHER (U.S.)
1. Canelo Alvarez
2. Gennady Golovkin
3. Anthony Joshua
4. Keith Thurman
5. Terence Crawford

NORM FRAUENHEIM (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Sergey Kovalev
4. Andre Ward
5. Roman Gonzalez

THOMAS GERBASI (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Deontay Wilder
3. Keith Thurman
4. Anthony Joshua
5. Jose Ramirez

TOM GRAY (U.K.)
1. Sergey Kovalev
2. Gennady Golovkin
3. Anthony Joshua
4. Canelo Alvarez
5. Terence Crawford

DAVID GREISMAN (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Deontay Wilder
3. Anthony Joshua
4. Felix Verdejo
5. Nicholas Walters

BRIAN HARTY (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Keith Thurman
4. Sergey Kovalev
5. Deontay Wilder

KEITH IDEC (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Sergey Kovalev
4. Felix Verdejo
5. Terence Crawford

GORDON MARINO (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Andre Ward
3. Canelo Alvarez
4. Keith Thurman
5. Sergey Kovalev

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL (U.S.)
1. Canelo Alvarez
2. Gennady Golovkin
3. Keith Thurman
4. Sergey Kovalev
5. Anthony Joshua

JOSEPH SANTOLIQUITO (U.S.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Sergey Kovalev
3. Andre Ward
4. Keith Thurman
5. Adrien Broner

LEM SATTERFIELD (U.S.)
1. Sergey Kovalev
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Gennady Golovkin
4. Felix Verdejo
5. Keith Thurman

TIM SMITH (U.S.)
1. Canelo Alvarez
2. Gennady Golovkin
3. Danny Garcia
4. Keith Thurman
5. Adrien Broner

ELLIOT WORSELL (U.K.)
1. Gennady Golovkin
2. Canelo Alvarez
3. Sergey Kovalev
4. Keith Thurman
5. Adrien Broner

Note: Golovkin was the only fighter on all 15 lists.

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Sergey Kovalev emerged as a major force in the sport by dominating Bernard Hopkins.

retire, and I hope it's later rather than sooner, there will be personalities to fill the arenas. There always are."

Arum, the CEO of Top Rank, is even more bullish.

"I really think the young guys on the way up may even be bigger from a personality standpoint than Mayweather and Pacquiao were," he said.

Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez are the two obvious heirs. Like Pacquiao, Golovkin comes from a faraway land (Kazakhstan) and has made his own name on his own terms. Unbeaten and with an engaging manner and boyish smile, Golovkin has 28 knockouts in 31 victories.

In October he drew the largest crowd ever at the StubHub Center in Carson, California, and got rid of normally rugged Marco Antonio Rubio early in the second round.

"I really want Gennady to fight Canelo because it might be the Leonard, Hearns, Hagler of that era," said Abel Sanchez, Golovkin's trainer. "But you have to remember: This guy (Golovkin) is 32 years old. He hasn't had a lot of wear and tear but he probably has four good years left. Once those four years are up, someone else has to take up the slack. Canelo is still young enough to take care of that. At least in their division, there's nobody else who can take over."

The most likely path for Golovkin is to wait for Canelo to fight Miguel Cotto in May and then fight the winner. Sanchez says a fight with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. is "my dream fight" but Chavez has dropped out of sight since his victory over Bryan Vera.

"But we need that one fight," Sanchez said. "The casual fan doesn't know him yet. We're getting a lot of letters and inquiries from women

fans now. So he's starting to be a little bit like Oscar that way."

If Golovkin has the credentials but not the following, Canelo is the opposite. He had immense trouble cutting off the ring against Erislandy Lara in July and was fortunate to emerge victorious. He also failed to challenge Mayweather significantly in 2013.

But Canelo-Mayweather drew 2.2 million pay-per-view buys and had the highest-grossing pay-per-view figure ever. Showtime put Canelo-Lara on pay-per-view amid general skepticism and claimed 350,000 buys, after which Canelo joined the HBO stable.

Lightweight Terence Crawford might be the best young American prospect. His destruction of Yuriorkis Gamboa in Crawford's hometown of Omaha showed his explosiveness. And even though Adrien Broner lost to Maidana, he's still young enough at 24 to make his way. His bad-boy swagger is sort of like Mayweather unplugged, which is a bit of a scary thought.

"And I think Keith Thurman might have the best credentials of that bunch at welterweight," Espinoza said, speaking of the unbeaten fighter from Clearwater, Florida.

Arum is extremely high on Felix Verdejo, the young Puerto Rican. "He's every bit as exciting as Felix Trinidad," Arum said. "And he's learning to speak English, which will help." Arum also thinks unbeaten Gilberto Ramirez, a telegenic middleweight, would be a perfect fit to meet Golovkin.

And we haven't even mentioned Tim Bradley, who is still only 30 and has victories over Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez.

No one is fretting about the business of boxing in Great Britain. Carl Froch's victory over George Groves sold out 80,000-seat Wembley Stadium. "And their

Felix Verdejo appears to be the next great Puerto Rican fighter.

CRAWFORD: JOSH HEDGES/GETTY IMAGES; VERDEJO: ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

Terence Crawford has the ability and fire to attract many fans.

house wasn't scaled back, either," Arum said.

So how will we be watching all these talented boxers of the future? Is pay-per-view part of our future or our past?

"Pay-per-view is a necessary evil to some extent," Espinoza said. "We would rather put everything on the Showtime network. It's a better value for our customers. It's impossible to tell the fighters who can make pay-per-view work to forego the financial incentive. But it's not lucrative enough for us to be our business model.

"If we didn't have pay-per-view for a while I think it would be good for the network and for boxing. It wouldn't be a problem at all."

Is live streaming a solution? Arum's cards in Macau are beginning to experiment with it. "It's interesting because it's not as expensive for the viewer," Arum said.

But, as Espinoza says, a boxing card is a communal experience. Shell out for the PPV, invite the neighborhood over, order pizzas and either Tecate or Corona, and make a night of it.

"People will catch up on old episodes on TV when they're on the train or plane, but sports is a group experience and boxing is a great example," Espinoza said. "Watching it the next morning on your phone with headphones is a different experience. But it's important to use those distribution methods. We're trying to capture the younger market because young people watch things differently."

Let's remember that Mayweather and Pacquiao are not retiring tomorrow. In fact, Pacquiao's last two fights have been more impressive than the previous three.

But the parade will keep marching, regardless of who drops off. And, through no fault of its own, boxing will proceed.

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IT WILL HAPPEN (OR NOT) IN 2015

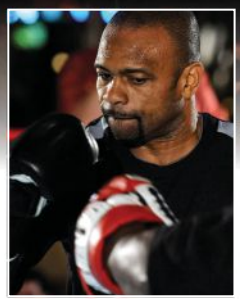
10 THINGS WE'LL SEE AND 10 WE WON'T IN THE COMING YEAR

By **David Greisman**

Boxing is the sport of the dramatic and unexpected, with literal swings in action that bring us such delights as Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. knocking Meldrick Taylor out with seconds to go or John Molina coming from behind to stop Mickey Bey. Yet boxing is also quite predictable at times. We can sense when we're getting mismatches and are proven right when they turn out to be whitewashes. We do a decent job of differentiating between future stars and overhyped prospects. And we already have a general grasp of what will and won't happen in 2015. Stay tuned for good news and bad. And we'll throw in a truly extended weather forecast to boot. »

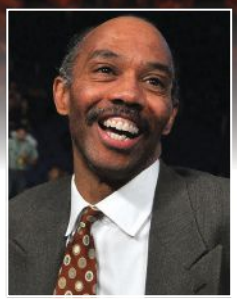
STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

10 THINGS WE'LL



ROY JONES SUFFERING ANOTHER BRUTAL KNOCKOUT

Roy Jones Jr. wasn't willing to travel overseas in his prime but the faded great's past four wins have come against lower-tier opponents in front of worshiping crowds in Latvia, Poland and Russia. His name's pretty much all he has left, which should be enough to get him the cruiserweight title shot he desires. That could get him hurt again. Nothing he has done since he was knocked out cold by Denis Lebedev in 2011 indicates that Jones can compete at a high level. It's a dangerous delusion, one on which one enterprising titleholder or another will be all-too-willing to capitalize.



AL HAYMON'S GRAND PLAN REVEALED

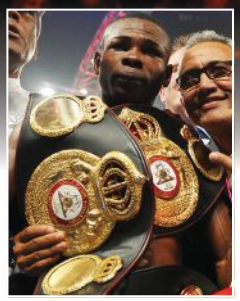
Al Haymon's power once derived largely from his role as adviser to Floyd Mayweather Jr. He has expanded his reach remarkably in the past couple of years and now has signed more than 100 fighters, from major stars to established titleholders and contenders to blue-chip up-and-comers and even some unheralded prospects. He also is reported to be purchasing TV time from NBC Sports Network. Haymon is one of the most influential figures in the sport and also one of the most mysterious. We should find out soon what Haymon has been building toward.

ONE TOP 168-POUNDER RETURN, ANOTHER RETIRE

Andre Ward fought just twice in three years since winning the Super Six World Boxing Classic at the end of 2011 thanks to an injury and then his litigation against promoter Dan Goossen, who has since passed away. The contract of the No. 1 guy at 168 pounds could be bought out and he could be back into the ring in 2015. The No. 2 guy, meanwhile, is Carl Froch, who has spoken about wanting one or two more big fights before retiring. Froch is 37 years old, has been on a great run and can step away content with his career accomplishments.

A NEW FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION CROWNED

Promoters typically keep their stars and titleholders away from each other for as long as possible because there's more money to be made that way. But Top Rank's Bob Arum has spoken of pairing off his top 126-pounders in an unofficial tournament and seems to be following through on that. Nicholas Walters stopped Nonito Donaire in October. (Pictured clockwise) Walters, Evgeny Gradovich, Jhonny Gonzalez (who's not with Top Rank) and Vasyl Lomachenko could take part in a competition that would produce a new champion by year's end.



GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX SWALLOWING HIS PRIDE

Guillermo Rigondeaux is one of the best boxers in the world. That doesn't mean he's deserving of the money his team is looking for. The deal they were hoping for after parting with Top Rank hasn't come. That means he'll have to swallow his pride in 2015, take less money and change his style to win back fans who soured on his dispassionate defensiveness. It doesn't matter that Rigondeaux is the RING champ at 122 pounds and holds two sanctioning-body titles. Fighters in that division and featherweight have too many other options with greater reward and less risk.

TOP PHOTO: DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; JONES, JR.: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; HAYMON: RAMON CAIRO; WARD: HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES; VERDEJO: ALEX MENENDEZ/GETTY IMAGES; HOPKINS: DREW HALLOWELL/GETTY IMAGES; BRONER: DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES FOR SHOWTIME SPORTS; MAYWEATHER (INSET): JOHN GURZINSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; HOPKINS: DREW HALLOWELL/GETTY IMAGES

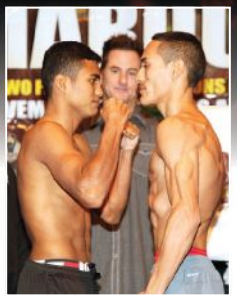
SEE IN 2015

BRONER HAVE THE YEAR HE SHOULD HAVE HAD IN 2014

Adrien Broner expected to be a major star in 2014. But then he was beaten up by Marcos Maidana and lost his welterweight title at the end of 2013 in a fight that was initially supposed to be his pay-per-view debut but was instead broadcast on Showtime. That sent Broner into a rebuilding mode: He dropped to 140 and had lower-profile outings against Carlos Molina and Emanuel Taylor, both of whom he defeated. He still won't headline pay-per-views in 2015 but he'll return to headlining major main events, possibly against top 140-pounders Danny Garcia or Lucas Matthysse.

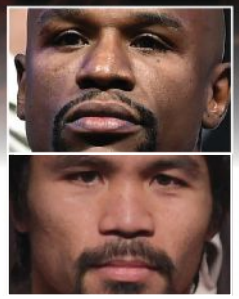
FELIX VERDEJO'S ASCENT INTO NEXT P.R. SENSATION

Felix Verdejo turned pro barely two years ago but already the lightweight prospect is being groomed to become the next star from Puerto Rico. He has a style that pleases fans who worshiped Felix Trinidad and supported Miguel Cotto. He has split most of his dates between Puerto Rico and two American cities with large Puerto Rican populations, New York and Orlando, Florida. He looks like he has the goods. And he has the same promoter, Top Rank, that brought Cotto from prospect to pay-per-view and has groomed numerous talents.



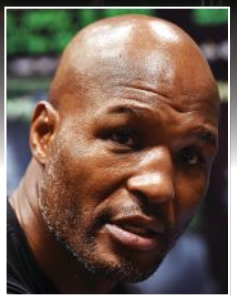
BIG LOVE, SMALL AUDIENCE FOR GONZALEZ-ESTRADA II

Fighters such as Roman Gonzalez (pictured left) and Juan Francisco Estrada (right) should've already been featured on major American networks. The problem is that the TV folks don't pay much attention to the lighter weights and show no interest in rebroadcasting major bouts emanating from other locations around the world. That's a shame because HBO fans won't be familiar with the two best flyweights in the world and what they bring into the ring if the network airs their inevitable rematch. The result will be a small audience. Mighty mites like Gonzalez and Estrada deserve greater recognition and boxing fans would embrace them.



MAYWEATHER-PACQUIAO FINALLY GET ANNOUNCED

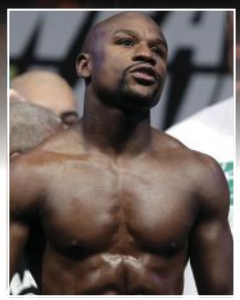
This is still a long shot but it's a prediction based on logic. Floyd Mayweather Jr. is running out of welterweights who can help him reach pay-per-view buy rates commensurate with his stature and reported contractual minimums. Manny Pacquiao has had to go to Macau to make up for his own declining pay-per-view drawing power. Boxing's Cold War has limited Pacquiao's opposition in the stacked 140- and 147-pound divisions. All of this could lead to Mayweather-Pacquiao happening six years after it should've – in 2016, not in 2015, leaving more than enough time for marketing.



BERNARD HOPKINS SAY GOODBYE AND MEAN IT

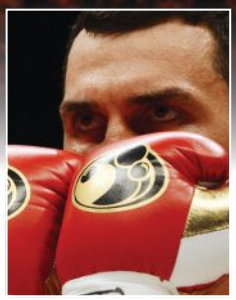
Bernard Hopkins turns 50 in January, a nice round number and a good milestone for a man who once promised his mother that he'd retire by 40. Hopkins has accomplished a great deal in that additional decade, moving up from middleweight to win the RING championship at light heavyweight on two separate occasions. His loss to Sergey Kovalev in November was a major setback in his mission to unify the belts at 175 and become champ once more. There's no need for Hopkins to try again, and he knows it.

10 THINGS WE WO



THE FINAL FIGHT OF FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. has two fights left on his Showtime contract but that doesn't mean he'll call it a career after headlining his presumed usual May and September pay-per-view shows. No present boxer has done a better job of turning the sweet science into big business than Mayweather. And there could be no bigger business than a 49-0 free agent putting his services up for bid in an attempt to go to 50-0 in what could be marketed as his farewell outing. He could keep that zero at the end of his record while adding another eight-digit payday to his bank account.

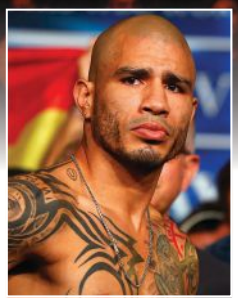


KLITSCHKO AGAINST STIVERNE-WILDER WINNER

Wladimir Klitschko holds the RING championship and three sanctioning body belts. Bermane Stiverne is the WBC titleholder and is due to defend against mandatory challenger Deontay Wilder. But while Klitschko has spoken about wanting to unify every title now that older brother Vitali has vacated and retired, politics will probably prevent Klitschko from facing the Stiverne-Wilder winner in 2015. First, Stiverne-Wilder needs to happen. Then the victor will owe a defense to Bryant Jennings, who will be the No. 1 contender, if he wants to keep his belt. Klitschko may instead get his own mandatory duties out of the way to set up a 2016 fight with whoever is the WBC's man by then.

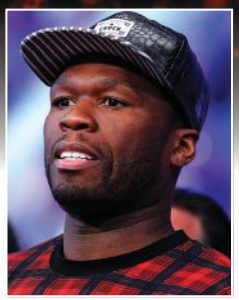
BETTER DRUG TESTING ON A REGULAR BASIS

Athletic commissions and boxing promoters still rarely conduct testing beyond a urine sample shortly before or immediately after a bout. They're not willing to spend money to test more often or to look for more advanced doping methods. Promoters are more concerned with losing money from cards being canceled after a positive drug test than preventing athletes from cheating in a sport where lives and health are on the line. Meanwhile, commissions have limited budgets and don't want to mandate anything that could send fights to another state.



MIGUEL COTTO AGAINST THE BEST MIDDLEWEIGHT IN THE WORLD

Miguel Cotto is the RING champion at 160 but he might stand little chance against the best middleweight out there, Gennady Golovkin. We won't find out in 2015. Even though HBO is in the Golovkin business and wants him in big fights, the network is also in the Miguel Cotto business and now the Canelo Alvarez business as well. Cotto vs. Canelo should come in the first half of the year and could result in a rematch. Look for HBO to push for Golovkin to move to 168 to face Andre Ward rather than have the Cotto-Canelo winner step in with "GGG."

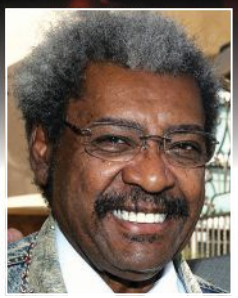


50 CENT TAKE PROMOTING AS SERIOUSLY AS JAY-Z

Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson got into boxing promotion because he thought he was going to do business with close friend Floyd Mayweather Jr. but Mayweather opted out of the deal and 50 Cent was left with a handful of fighters under contract. His company has not done much of note, which is no surprise given that he earns far more money through rapping and other businesses than he ever would in the fight game. Fellow rapper Jay-Z's Roc Nation, meanwhile, is making big offers and bids as it tries to launch. And it wisely has former Golden Boy COO Dave Itskowitch at its helm.

MAYWEATHER/ARUM/DE LA HOYA: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; KLITSCHKO: PATRIK STOLLARZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; 50 CENT: RICH SCHULTZ/GETTY IMAGES; BELTS: OLIVER HARDT/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

N'T SEE IN 2015



DON KING HAVING ONE LAST RUN AT PROMINENCE

Don King was once one of the two top promoters and simultaneously the most famous and most infamous businessman in the sport. Those days were long ago. King only has one fighter of note in heavyweight titleholder Bermane Stiverne. The wild-haired one almost never has dates on the major networks. Reporters have noted King's largely empty headquarters in Florida. Longtime staff members have left him. He doesn't even have a working website anymore. King was long one of boxing's most colorful characters. It's past time for the notorious flag-waver to wave a white one, surrender and step away.

GETTING WHAT WE HOPED FOR FROM BOXING'S COLD WAR ENDING

Yes, Bob Arum (pictured left) and Oscar De La Hoya (right) have made peace. Yes, Top Rank and Golden Boy have paired together again. Yes, Miguel Cotto (Top Rank) and Canelo Alvarez (Golden Boy) could face each other for one of the biggest bouts of 2015. But the end of boxing's Cold War won't be as meaningful as we'd hoped. So many fights still remain out of reach because many boxers might be under contract with boxing adviser Al Haymon and not actually with Golden Boy. Arum and Haymon do not have a working relationship, which leaves numerous matchups next to impossible to make.

A BIG FIGHT BETWEEN AMIR KHAN AND KELL BROOK

After the huge spectacle that was Carl Froch vs. George Groves in front of a massive crowd at Wembley Stadium, speculation turned to another big domestic event in the United Kingdom featuring British welterweights Amir Khan (pictured top) and Kell Brook (pictured bottom), especially after Brook took a world title from Shawn Porter. But Khan continues to be set on something and someone else: the big payday and potential superstardom that would come with facing (and defeating) Floyd Mayweather Jr. Khan first has to get by Devon Alexander in December. Brook will need to keep raising his profile before Khan gives him a chance.

FEMALE BOXERS GETTING MORE ATTENTION

The only American medalists in the 2012 Olympics had a pair of X chromosomes to go along with their pair of gloves. Yet you haven't seen gold medalist Claressa Shields (pictured) or bronze winner Marlen Esparza get the kind of fanfare that would've come were they male. There is a glass ceiling for female boxers in the United States, even though female boxing has drawn large audiences in several other countries — and even though one of the biggest stars in mixed martial arts is the UFC's Ronda Rousey.

FEWER SANCTIONING BODY BELTS

The pervasiveness of title belts in boxing should be like currency in Zimbabwe: The more that's out there, the less they're worth. Except that's only true in terms of how we fans view the various titles, be they super, regular or interim, be they gold, silver or diamond, be they intercontinental or regional or be they champions in recess or champions emeritus. The fact is that boxers still like these belts, still fight for them, still prize them and still pay sanctioning fees for the privilege of fighting for them. The rules of inflation don't apply. The more belts the sanctioning bodies give out, the more bucks they get in return.

Michael Buffer might say: "Let's get ready to rumble … or run for the exits."

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

THE FIGHTS RING CONTRIBUTORS WANT – AND DON'T WANT – TO SEE IN 2015

BART BARRY

Want to see: Carl Froch vs. Gennady Golovkin
Why: Television is invested in Golovkin. Froch fills football – not tennis – stadiums. We already know Froch is the genuine item. It's long past time to find out if Golovkin is too.

Don't want to see: The Goossen Family vs. Andre Ward
Why: The lawsuits and counter lawsuits filed by super middleweight champion Andre Ward and his longtime promoter, the late Dan Goossen, have done damage enough to all involved. They've damaged our sport, too, by keeping one of its greatest contemporary practitioners out of the ring. A prompt settlement is needed.

RON BORGES

Want to see: Nicholas Walters vs. Mikey Garcia
Why: Walters is a powerful puncher who they don't call "Axe Man" for nothing. Garcia takes a similarly concussive approach to the sport, which makes this a knockout match. At 5-foot-7, Walters won't be able to stay in the featherweight division for long and above him Garcia awaits. Hopefully not for long.

Don't want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao
Why: Nobody wants to read yesterday's news and I don't want to see a fight that should have happened five years ago. Both guys are on the dark side of the road, shadows of what they were at their best. In boxing, as in life, there is a time for every season and the time for this fight has past.

BERNARD FERNANDEZ

Want to see: Sergey Kovalev vs. Adonis Stevenson
Why: It would be nice to have an actual undisputed champion again, even though the alphabet bandits would splinter the title again pretty soon. This would be an interesting matchup that might actually be made, which gives me more hope for an answered prayer than such offerings as Gennady Golovkin-Andre Ward (unlikely if an obstinate Ward remains in legal limbo) and Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Manny Pacquiao (maybe when the Chicago Cubs win the World Series).

Don't want to see: Roy Jones Jr. vs. Krzysztof Wlodarczyk
Why: If the once-great Jones was going to fight a Polish guy whose name I can't spell, it should have been a decade ago, when he was near his peak and against Dariusz Michalczewski.

THOMAS GERBASI

Want to see: Gennady Golovkin vs. any big name
Why: Canelo, Cotto, Chavez Jr., Ward – I don't care who it is. Let's just see GGG in a big fight against a "name" opponent so we can finally see him on the big stage and see if he's truly as good as he has looked so far.

Don't want to see: Wladimir Klitschko vs. Shannon Briggs
Why: As bizarre as it may sound, it's not out of the realm of possibility that the shopworn Briggs' repeated and disgraceful harassment of Klitschko could very well end up with him in a title fight in 2015. Don't do it, Wladimir.

DAVID GREISMAN

Want to see: Roman Gonzalez vs. Juan Francisco Estrada II
Why: Estrada was just 22 years old when he challenged then-108-pound titleholder Gonzalez in 2012. He lost, went up to 112 and captured two world titles there. Now Gonzalez is the RING flyweight champion, Estrada has two more years of experience under his belt and their styles and skills could make for an explosive rematch.

Don't want to see: Wladimir Klitschko vs. Shannon Briggs
Why: All of these headlines and videos in which Briggs is stalking, taunting and threatening Klitschko seem awfully contrived, as if Klitschko's camp is somehow complicit in building up Briggs as something more than the over-the-hill heavyweight he is. Don't be fooled. Briggs suffered a bad enough beating against Vitali Klitschko in 2010. He doesn't need another.

KEITH IDEC

Want to see: Sergey Kovalev vs. Adonis Stevenson
Why: They're both big punchers and it's the only fight in the light heavyweight division that'll generate great interest from fans. Now that Kovalev has dominated Bernard Hopkins, Stevenson shouldn't be allowed to hide behind the HBO/Showtime conflict and claim that's the reason they can't fight.

Don't want to see: Miguel Cotto vs. Gennady Golovkin
Why: Cotto is headed toward a more lucrative pay-per-view fight against Canelo Alvarez and doesn't seem interested in facing the knockout artist from Kazakhstan. That's a wise choice for Cotto's health and wealth because even this improved version of Cotto we've

MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

seen dominate Sergio Martinez and Delvin Rodriguez wouldn't fare well against Golovkin.

NORM FRAUENHEIM

Want to see: Gennady Golovkin vs. Canelo Alvarez
Why: There are options but few takers in GGG's quest to fulfill his potential. Canelo might not make one of the G's in his initials mean great instead of good. But it's a start. Canelo sounds willing, unlike Miguel Cotto or Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. or (fill in the blank here).

Don't want to see: Jermain Taylor vs. anybody
Why: Is this a comeback or Russian roulette? Former ringside physician Dr. Margaret Goodman called it the latter when Taylor was licensed on the basis of medicals that deemed him fit to fight after a brain bleed. Now he has been charged in a shooting incident. Every time he answers an opening bell, there's a queasy feeling we're about to witness a tragedy.

GORDON MARINO

Want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao
Why? Mayweather is famous for his adjustments and right-hand counter, to which Pacquiao is highly vulnerable. Many believe this is an easy victory for "Money" because he is bigger, faster and has superior ring smarts. I'm not so sure. I would love to see if Mayweather can tame an aggressive southpaw with flash-dance feet, lateral movement and concussive power. Maidana and Cotto proved the adage that pressure is the only way to beat speed and skills. Manny can bring a kind of heat that Mayweather isn't accustomed to.

Don't want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs Amir Khan
Why? Mayweather is not an exciting fighter but his technique is sublime. Khan is not an exciting fighter and his technique is much less than sublime.

JOSEPH SANTOLIQUITO

Want to see: Gennady Golovkin vs. Floyd Mayweather Jr.
Why: Mayweather is the greatest fighter of this generation. It would be nice to see him take a chance, much like Sugar Ray Robinson, the all-time greatest, did in stepping up in weight to fight light heavyweight champ Joey Maxim. Golovkin is not much bigger than Floyd, who likes to proclaim his greatness. What better way to prove it than to take the best 160-pounder's title.

Don't want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao
Why: This fight is long past its sell-by date. Pacquiao, a first-ballot Hall of Famer, is shopworn in my view. Mayweather has lost a step too but I feel he's closer to his prime skills than "Pac-Man." It would be an ugly Mayweather unanimous decision.

TIM SMITH

Want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao
Why: The fight is well beyond the sell-by date. But like a starving man eyeing that stale vending-machine sandwich, I've got to have it. I'm fed up with the nonsense around making the fight, but I want to see it for history's sake. Mayweather's legacy will forever be tarnished if he doesn't do it. And after he retires, I don't want to ask him about not fighting Pacquiao every time I interview him.

Don't want to see: Bernard Hopkins vs. Gennady Golovkin
Why not: Sergey Kovalev could have knocked out Hopkins if he weren't so cautious. Golovkin doesn't have that gene. I'd like to see Hopkins keep his legacy, and brain, intact until he decides to call it quits for good.

DON STRADLEY

Want to see: Gennady Golovkin vs. Sergey Kovalev
Why: It's been a while since a great, young middleweight has faced a great, young light heavyweight. Since neither weight class is loaded with big-money opponents, let's see these two awesome punchers go at it. Andre Ward has been mentioned as a possible opponent for each but who knows when he'll be back in the ring.

Don't want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. a soft touch
Why: After his two hard fights in 2014, it wouldn't surprise anyone if Mayweather took on a less-than-thrilling opponent. The problem is that Mayweather seems even more annoying when he's fighting a lesser foe. We still have to endure his drivel and dreary, defensive style. A decent opponent makes Mayweather almost tolerable. No softies, please.

ANSON WAINWRIGHT

Want to see: Roman Gonzalez vs. Juan Francisco Estrada II
Why: It has been two years since their first entertaining fight. During that time, Estrada has improved and gained two flyweight titles while "Chocolatito," the RING champ, has continued his path of destruction. The rematch would be a barnburner.

Don't want to see: Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Amir Khan
Why: A fighter should earn the right to fight for a world title. Khan has no resume at 147. That said, if he can beat Devon Alexander, he would take a step in the right direction. This also wouldn't be an entertaining fight stylistically.

MARK WHICKER

Want to see: Nicolas Walters vs. Vasyl Lomachenko
Why: Walters was a bad Caribbean dream for Nonito Donaire in October, disposing of him in six rounds and showing the chin and the athleticism required of a champion. Lomachenko is one of the greatest amateur fighters ever and knows how to defuse aggressiveness. Knock me over with these feathers.

Don't want to see: Brandon Rios vs. Mike Alvarado
Why: Their first fight was maybe the best in this century. A third one would be triage. Alvarado hasn't been the same since he ran into Ruslan Provodnikov and Rios' accumulated blows and added weight hampered him against Manny Pacquiao and Diego Chaves. This would be cruelty, not gallantry.

ELLIOT WORSELL

Want to see: Tyson Fury vs. Anthony Joshua
Why: As Britain awaits the next Wembley Stadium superfight, heavyweights Fury and Joshua represent the best hope of delivering. It's fighting man against athletic specimen. Joshua says all the right things, Fury says all the wrong things. Better still, they're enormous, engaging and, providing both keep winning, could become crossover stars of British sport.

Don't want to see: Carl Froch vs. Mikkel Kessler III
Why: Froch doesn't have much left to achieve in the sport. A Vegas date with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. is a swansong, an all-British showdown with James DeGale is apparently a nuisance (for him), a return with Andre Ward is a conundrum best left unsolved and a rubber-match with a semi-retired Mikkel Kessler is a testimonial at this stage. Brutal but pointless.

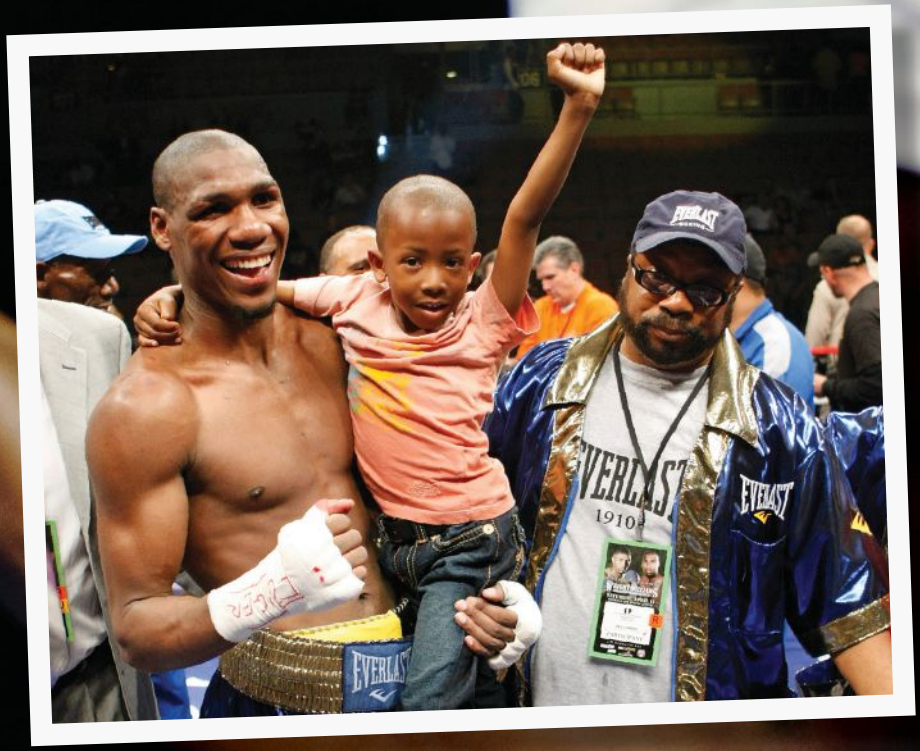
Paul Williams hasn't lost the smile of better days (inset).

INSET: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

THE FIGHTER WITHIN

PAUL WILLIAMS HAS ENDURED MANY DARK MOMENTS SINCE HE WAS PARALYZED IN A MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT BUT HAS BUILT A NEW LIFE AND DREAMS BIG

By **Joseph Santoliquito** • Photos by **Todd Bennett**



Megafight weekends in Las Vegas are ideal for the want-to-be-seen crowd. Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Marcos Maidana I was no different. It attracted the movie stars, who smiled, waved and settled into seats near the ring. Popular old fighters came in, providing nostalgic moments. Faux celebrities loitered about, looking for face time in front of anyone aiming a phone. They all wanted to be noticed.

Except for Paul Williams.

Cooped up in a cramped, dim hotel room, too self-conscious to be wrenched away, Williams sat with his chin on his chest glaring out at the riot of Las Vegas lights splayed before him. He didn't want any part of the hustle and bustle going on below. Peering down was fine. If it were up to him, though, he would've snapped his fingers and vanished rather than endure those stares of pity as he wheeled through the horde in the MGM Grand Casino lobby last May.

The former WBO welterweight world champ refused to go anywhere unless he was summoned for an obligatory appearance. One was the Mayweather-Maidana weigh-in at the MGM Grand Arena. If he hadn't been in Vegas to be honored that weekend by the Boxing Writers Association of America with the "Bill Crawford Award for Courage in Overcoming Adversity," Williams would have been home in Aiken, South Carolina.

That outlook changed. Quickly.

Uneasy, Williams gripped the rubber wheels of his wheelchair to ease the tension. His insides churning with anxiety, he put on that everything-is-all-right face as soon as the ping sounded with the opening of the elevator doors. He could never have imagined what he would encounter next.

What normally would have taken 20 minutes, going back and forth

from the arena to Williams' room, took hours. Flanked by his manager, Corey Robinson, and his wife, Shuchinda "Chinda" Williams, "The Punisher" signed everything put in front of him and hammed it up for the cameras. He and the dozens of well-wishers were all grins as they descended upon him. One was so enthralled to see Williams that he lifted his shirt and asked him to sign his stomach.

But it wasn't until Williams arrived back in his room that he realized what had happened.

He rolled in, took a contemplative moment, then twirled around in his wheelchair to face Robinson and Chinda and said, "You know, I thought they forgot about me."

Robinson asked, "Who, Paul?"

"Everyone in the fight game; the fans, the fighters. I thought they forgot me," Williams responded.

Robinson froze. Tears rolled down his face.

The moment transformed The Punisher. He mattered. For however brief a moment in time it was, he was whole again. They didn't forget.

"I couldn't say anything after that," Robinson recalled. "I'm emotional. His wife is in tears too. Paul had been so uncomfortable about being in the wheelchair that whole weekend and, after that, he wanted to go out everywhere – 'Let's go back out to the casino. Let's go out on the strip,' he told me. Paul wanted to reconnect with his fans."

He wanted to reconnect with the world.

Williams felt he had lost his identity overnight after he was paralyzed in a motorcycle accident on the morning of May 27, 2012, in Atlanta. He was a world champion fighting on TV one moment, having people butt in front of him in restaurants because they didn't see him the next.

But a story that has been seen as tragic by those familiar with Williams and the fire he brought into the ring every time he fought isn't over. Williams is intent on defying the odds to claim one more victory: He wants to walk again.

Williams, 33, looks like he always did – lanky, but strong. In fact, if not for the wheelchair, he appears to be in fighting shape. And, in a way, he has to be. There's an internal battle raging, one between "The Punisher," the 6-foot-1 warrior who had no problem taking a punch to deliver one, and "Wheelchair Paul," who occasionally feels sorry for himself and struggles to cope.

News of Williams' accident sent ripples of shock across every tier of the boxing community. He was home that last weekend in May to celebrate his brother's wedding, taking a break from training for the biggest fight of his life against Canelo Alvarez in September. Then everything changed.

'I HAVE MY BAD DAYS AND MY GOOD DAYS. I DO FEEL THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO ME, WHO I WAS AND WHO I AM.'
– PAUL WILLIAMS

May 27, 2012.

"I know I can't change time, but I do think about that day a lot," said Williams, speaking to THE RING in one of former trainer George Peterson's offices in Aiken. "What if I was going a little slower? What if that car in front of me wasn't there? There's a million of them, all of those 'What ifs, what ifs.' I've seen both worlds, being a world champion and now being paralyzed. If I could change time, I would. But I can't, so I have to deal with it. If I wasn't able to deal with it, I probably would have committed suicide by now or would be angry and depressed all of the time.

"I have my bad days and my good days. I do feel there are two sides to me, who I was and who I am. I had all this money, all this fame, I was on top of the world. This preacher told me that one day I was going to go back to being Paul 'The Punisher' Williams again. Everyone loved me. Until that day comes, I have something to fall back on."

Williams punches his own clock these days. He has no set schedule. He has also taken care of himself financially. He owns eight properties that he rents out.

"I'm my own boss, able to move at my own pace," he said. "I don't have to worry about bills because I own my house. Mr. Peterson set me up real well. Everything is paid for. I started thinking ahead before my career ended, knowing that one day it will end and I better be ready when it does. I just didn't think it would end as quickly as it did."

He shoots his guns. He fishes. His three children, Paul, 11, daughter Corey, 10, and son Chance, 6, occupy a lot of his time. And he's lucky to have Chinda in his life. He says everything is just the way it was when he was able to walk, except that he's "sitting down."

"I am blessed. That's how I try to think about it all of the time," Williams said. "After I got hurt, I have the same mentality than when I was walking. I drive on my own (using hand controls). If God gave me back my strength, and I could pop up right now, I'd call my girl and we'd get back on that bike again. I'll get my legs back; it will just take a minute."

As Williams' paydays grew, he invested in properties in the Aiken and Augusta, Georgia, areas. The

TODD BENNETT

Williams was in good spirits at a Paul Williams Foundation function in Sumter, S.C.

first was purchased after he beat Antonio Margarito to win his first of two welterweight titles in July 2007. Following each subsequent fight, he'd spot another prime location and purchase more properties.

He handles the mundane daily chores of tracking tenants' rent and scheduling repairs himself.

"As long as I keep paying my taxes on what I own and keep upgrading the properties, I'll keep a higher level of renters," Williams said. "I live off of that. I don't mind doing a lot of the work. I obviously can't stand up to do a lot of the work. And some buildings I can't get into because they have stairs."

There are times realities such as that get frustrating. For example, he'll dress to go out and suddenly have "an accident."

"I'll get depressed over that," he said. "Like one day, I'm riding in my car, and then, ugh, it happens. There's a mess. Those are the hard times people don't see or want to hear about. It's like when you're in a wheelchair, you're doing double the work. I've learned to joke about it, how I need diapers. I can't control when I go to the bathroom. I'm a baby now that someone has to clean me up. I pee on myself, I do something else on myself. I know that I'm not doing it on purpose. But I do want to feel things again. I want to be with my wife again. That's what hurts the most."

Williams has received many offers to appear at fights or speaking engagements but, until recently, he never responded. He wanted nothing to do with the public as "Wheelchair Paul," as described earlier when he arrived in Las Vegas for the Mayweather-Maidana fight. It was too embarrassing.

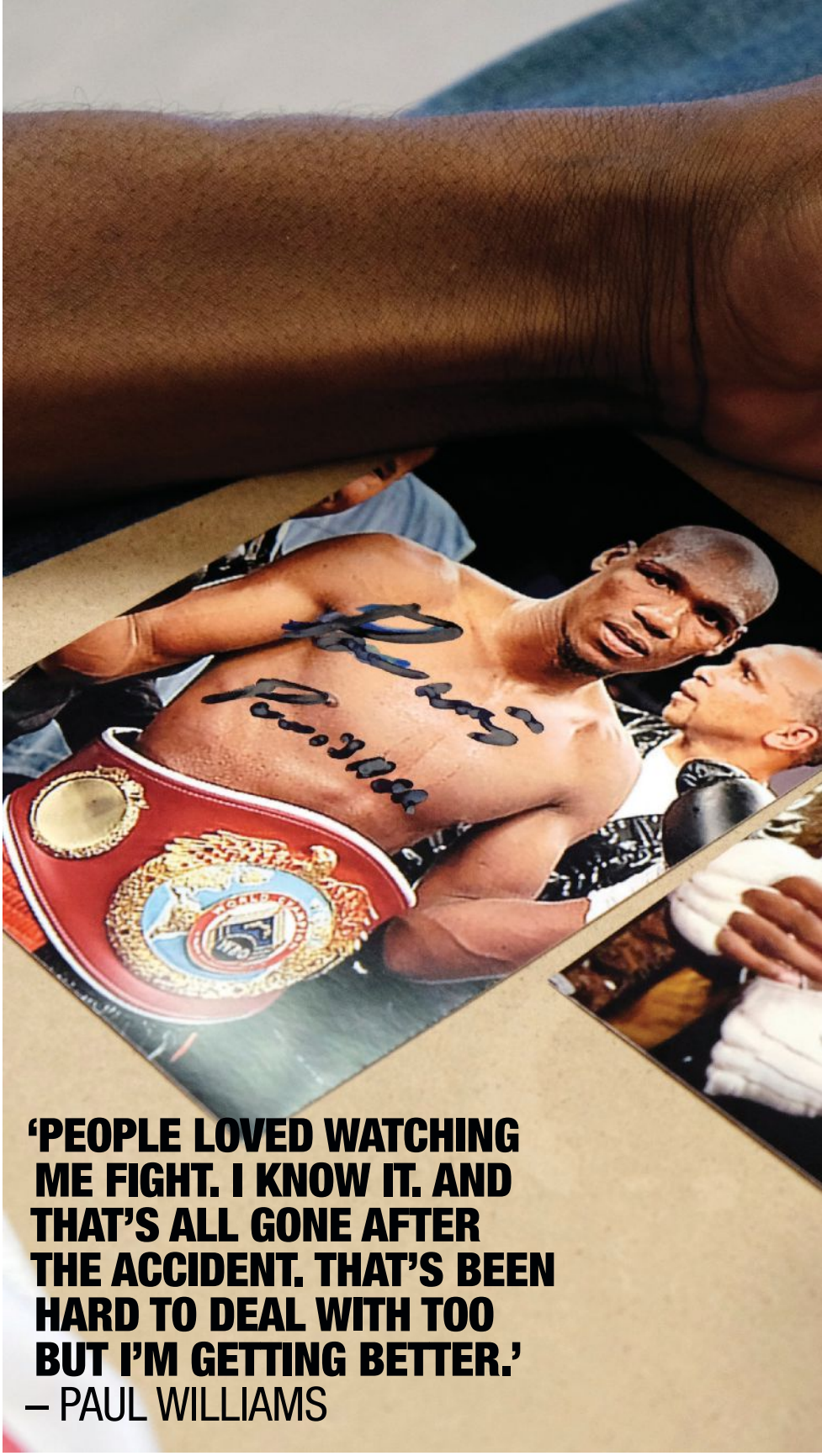
It's more than that, though. He also feels he let down those who

care about him – his family, his friends, his team, his fans – after he was paralyzed. That might not seem rational but it's what he believes.

"People loved watching me fight. I know it. And that's all gone after the accident," Williams said. "That's been hard to deal with too but I'm getting better."

Those closest to Williams would attest to that, particularly after the trip to Las Vegas. The interaction with the fans seemed to shake him out of his lethargy and give him hope.

"It's hard to see loved ones go through that pain," Chinda said. "I had to go through some hell. Everyone around Paul did. There were a lot of times I didn't want him seeing me cry and I'm sure there were plenty of times Paul didn't want me seeing him cry. Vegas had a lot to do with Paul's healing. A lot of your manhood goes out of the window; it's gone when you're paralyzed. He's faced with asking for help in situations that he didn't before. He does almost everything on his own. He operates the car with a cane. I've driven in the car with Paul when he's driven with the cane. It's something he can do on his own. Above everything, I want to see Paul walk again. I would do anything to see Paul walk again."



'PEOPLE LOVED WATCHING ME FIGHT. I KNOW IT. AND THAT'S ALL GONE AFTER THE ACCIDENT. THAT'S BEEN HARD TO DEAL WITH TOO BUT I'M GETTING BETTER.'
– PAUL WILLIAMS

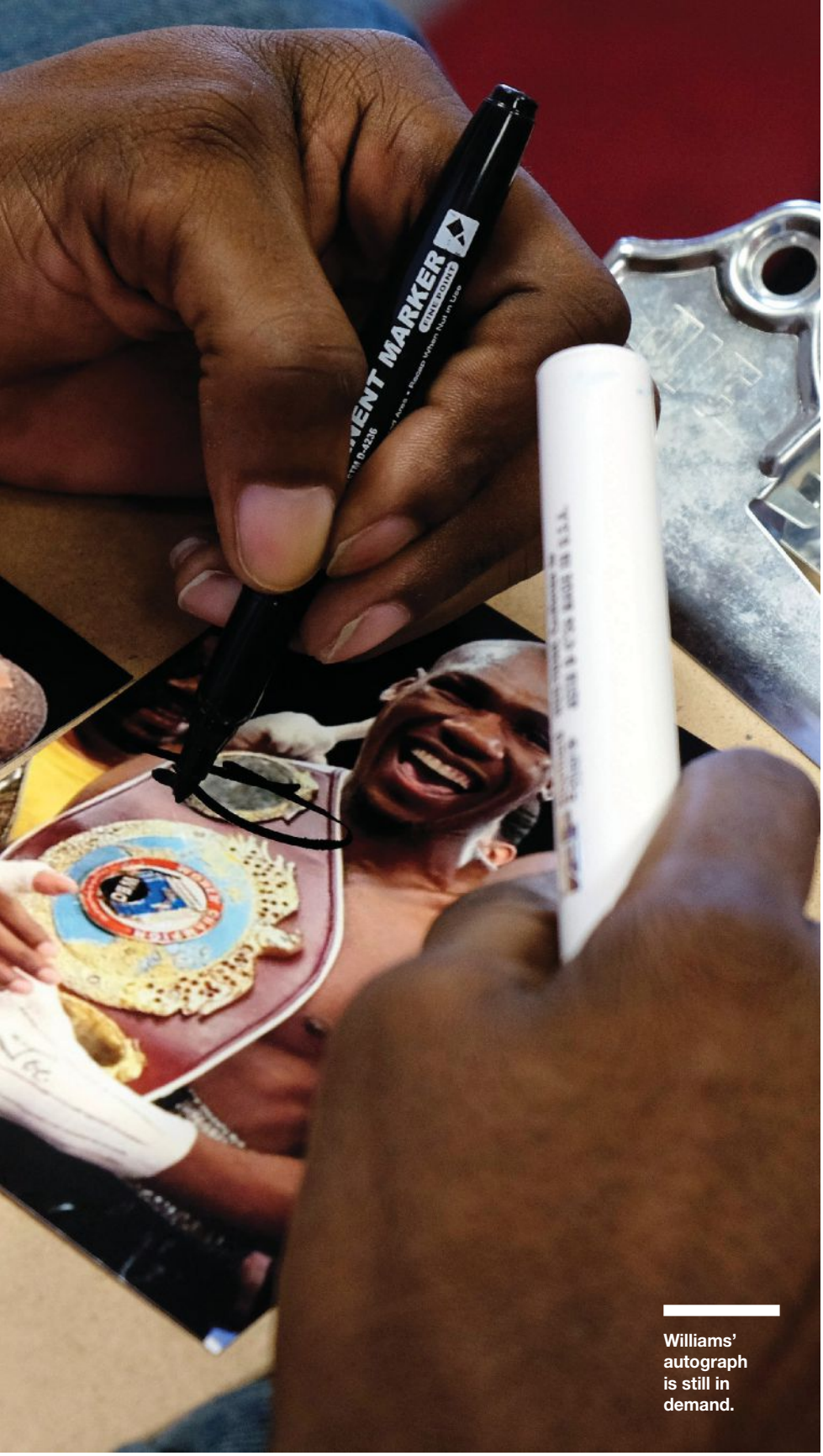
Chinda can envision it. So can Peterson. So can Robinson. So can everyone in Williams' life.

But can he?

The crash was so severe that it catapulted Williams about 60 feet through the air. The way bystanders described it, his body was folded in half "like a suitcase." It caused catastrophic damage.

"Paul had what's called a fractured dislocation, where the vertebrae is not only broken but the spine has dislocated. So the spinal cord [was] severely injured as the result of his motorcycle accident," said Dr. John M. Rhee, a renowned spinal surgeon who operated on Williams and is an associate professor of orthopedic surgery at Emory University in Atlanta. "There's always hope but the reality is it's highly unlikely he will walk again. There's always a chance and I wouldn't want to dash Paul's hopes but his injury was really that bad.

"Paul had what was a complete spinal cord injury. That's the worst kind of spinal cord injury to have. Basically, the injury left him with



Williams' autograph is still in demand.

no motor functions and no sensory functions below the level where he injured himself (mid-chest). It's the injury that has the worst prognosis for any kind of recovery. Because Paul is so healthy and fit, he's healed from the surgery, but that's different from his nerves healing. ... In cases like Paul's, it's again incredibly rare that they are able to walk again. He can lead a comfortable life. His surgery has healed. It's always possible that things can wake up."

It's a possibility, however remote, to which everyone around Williams clings.

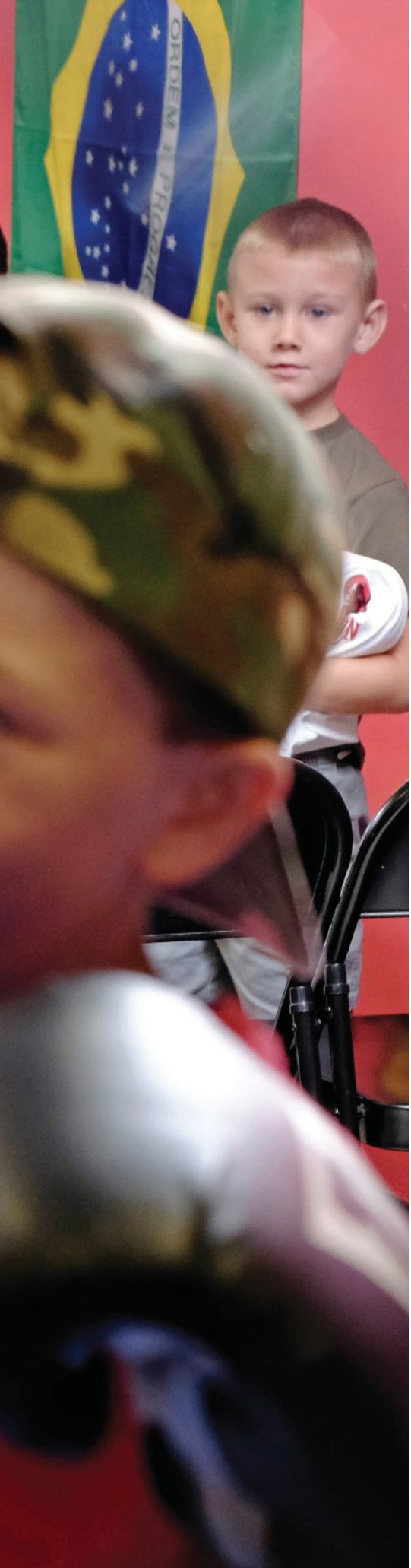
"It's over two years and it's been a battle accepting this," Chinda said. "It shatters your future a little until you come to grips with it. In the beginning it wasn't easy for Paul; he did feel sorry for himself. There were times when he was by himself when he was emotional. I think it bothered Paul that he felt he let everyone down. He says he's sorry to me at least once a week. It was like he did something to the people closest to him, like he disappointed us by getting into the accident.

"The fighter is still inside him. I just want to see it. That first year, Paul was in some denial and he was told he had a chance, between him and God, that he might be able to walk again. With the research we've done on our own, and when we were told last June that Paul's spinal cord was healed, that gave us hope. But this is where we butt heads all the time. I want him getting into the gym more and being more physical. He didn't want to before the Vegas trip. Walking again should be Paul's motivation."

It was Peterson who once saw something in Williams. He introduced him to boxing. He watched as his protege battled his way with grim determination through many difficult trials in the ring, watched his life change. They are like a father and son.

Peterson is certain that Williams will get through this trial because of the man inside the damaged body.

"He's just as strong-minded as when he was in the ring fighting. That's still there," Peterson said. "He stays as positive as he can. He always has that aggressiveness. He keeps track of his businesses; he goes hunting in his wheelchair in the woods. He even shot a buck last spring. He's just as active as he was in the gym. He's maintained a positive attitude around people,



because he doesn't want anyone feeling sorry for him."

Then Peterson revealed something: "Paul never cared anything about boxing. Nothing at all. It just fell in his lap. It wasn't something that he wanted to do. Boxing was dropped on him because he was very gifted at it. And after a while, Paul decided that he had to make that his job. It was lucrative, the money was good and he wasn't doing anything else. He would go with Anthony Simpkins to the gym and that's how he came around.

'I'VE SEEN BOTH WORLDS, BEING A WORLD CHAMPION AND NOW BEING PARALYZED. IF I COULD CHANGE TIME, I WOULD. BUT I CAN'T, SO I HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT.'
– PAUL WILLIAMS

"If Paul would have had just a little bit of a concern for his occupation, his fame would have surpassed Sugar Ray Leonard, Tommy Hearns, some of those welterweight greats. Paul Williams was 147 pounds and with that height at 6-1, he would have beaten them all. That's a compliment to Paul. My great regret for Paul is not the fights that he lost but the fighters that never fought Paul. Floyd Mayweather had a belt, Shane Mosley had a welterweight title, Kermit Cintron had a belt. None of them wanted to fight Paul. He got extremely frustrated about that."

Peterson was there by his fighter's bedside mere hours after the accident. He has been there throughout the whole process, willing to do anything within his powers just as he had helped Williams become a world-class boxer.

"If Paul can start working out again, and I've seen some of his workouts, he can walk again," Peterson said. "Paul will admit he's lazy. Paul is not a self-motivated person. That's always been the great missing link. When he was fighting, I had to stay on him. When I wasn't there 24/7, those were the times Paul would fall through the cracks. I want to see him walk again. It's up to Paul."

Chinda recounts a recurring dream Williams' son Chance has about his dad. It goes something like this: Chance hears someone fall in his parents' bedroom. He runs to see that it's his dad on the floor. He goes to serve as a crutch for his father, who gently nudges Chance aside and begins taking stilted steps on his own.

That's a dream they all share, to see Williams dip through the ropes, unassisted, and back into a ring again in a packed arena, waving to tearful fans whose eyes are fixated on him not out of sympathy but in awe. He is laboring to make that dream come true. He's found the motivation to hit the gym again, pounding the speed bag locked into a contraption that enables him to stand. Three days a week he undergoes water therapy and electroshock therapy to coax leg movement. Strenuous stuff but nothing he can't handle.

After all, we're talking about Paul Williams, two-time welterweight champion.

"We would all like to see it happen," Chinda said. "There has been a change. Paul saw people still do care about him in Vegas last May. That was very important."

To rebuild his spirit, to help him feel like The Punisher again.

Williams seems to enjoy sharing his pugilistic wisdom with youngsters.

U N B E A

GENNADY GOLOVKIN AND **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** APPEAR TO BE MORE DIFFICULT TO BEAT THAN FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR. AT THIS POINT. THE EXPERTS EXPLAIN WHY.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. had been untouchable for a decade or more, his sublime defensive skills blended with sharp, accurate punches and unmatched guile to form an uberboxer.

Then, in the past year, signs of vulnerability became apparent courtesy of Father Time and a determined Marcos Maidana. Mayweather beat Maidana in two fights but had to work much harder than in the past.

Mayweather, 37, obviously remains formidable but one could argue that he's no longer the most unbeatable fighter in the world.

Who is?

That distinction might belong to two fighters, one overflowing with talent but still on the rise and one with the stature of a giant and the well-honed ability to take full advantage of it.

Gennady Golovkin seems to be a complete package, one with a vast and successful amateur background and the undeniable ability to set up what might be the hardest punches in the sport.

GGG has beaten all 31 of his opponents and stopped 28 of them, including the last 18 even as his level of opposition has gotten progressively better. That's impressive.

GOLOVKIN: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES; KLITSCHKO: PATRIK STOLLARZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TABLE?

Wladimir Klitschko hasn't lost a fight in 10 years, winning 21 in a row (15 by knockout) during that span. In fact, he has barely lost a round since Sam Peter gave him problems in 2005.

You might say, "Wait a second. Golovkin still hasn't faced a top-tier opponent." Valid point. We won't know with certainty how good the Kazakhstani is until 2015 at the earliest. We know this, though: He has obliterated a number of legitimate contenders who had the courage to face him.

And you might say, "Hold on. Klitschko was stopped three times between 1998 and 2004. How can he be unbeatable?"

The answer to that question is simple: This isn't the same Klitschko. The vulnerable Klitschko had yet to develop his technique and confidence. The current version of Klitschko employs a system of fighting that gives his opponents virtually no chance of winning.

But we'll let the experts tell it, trainers and fighters who have worked with or fought Golovkin or Klitschko. They'll tell you what makes these amazing fighting machines so frustratingly difficult to overcome.

It's extremely difficult to imagine either Gennady Golovkin (previous page) or Wladimir Klitschko (above) losing a fight.

'FREAKISH' P.58

MASTER OF EXECUTION P.64

THOSE WHO HAVE FACED **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** SAY OPPONENTS SHOULD GO FOR BROKE … AND HOPE FOR THE BEST

By **Elliot Worsell**

'FREAKISH'

Daniel Geale (right) ended up in a predictable position when he met Gennady Golovkin in July.

(INSET) JONATHAN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES; ALEXIS CUAREZMA/GETTY IMAGES

Golovkin's ability to hurt his opponents is what stands out in their minds.

It was just another day at the office for the Lithuanian sparring partner. The punches that bounced off his jaw and midsection at an alarming rate had no discernible effect. Grinning throughout, he was by now numb to the punishment, immune to the pain. He had to be. It was his job.

So at one with pain was Sergej Rozvadovskij, in fact, he'd for years been a go-to sparring partner for many of the top talents in Europe. Mikkel Kessler, Arthur Abraham and Juergen Braehmer to name three. All big punchers, all world champions, Rozvadovskij smiled through rounds spent with each of them in much the same way he smiled through the aforementioned session with George Groves, the super middleweight who treated his anatomy like a drum kit inside a West London boxing gym.

It seemed only one man had ever hurt and unsettled Rozvadovskij in the ring.

"I sparred Gennady Golovkin in Germany about five years ago and he was easily the hardest puncher I have ever faced," said Rozvadovskij, wiping the sweat from his forehead with a towel after the sparring session with Groves. "Even during my many years kickboxing, I have never been hit so hard by a leg or head kick. He punches harder than kickboxers can kick."

Gone was the carefree smile on Rozvadovskij's face. He was now wide-eyed and very serious.

"There were only two sparring partners – me and a guy from Ukraine – who were able to stand up to Golovkin for six rounds," he continued. "Everybody else was either knocked out or quit early and were sent home.

"They had to bring in light heavyweights for him just to make sure he got some rounds. But, by the second or third round, they would also go home because he had broken their orbital bone or had smashed

their ribs.

"Normally when I take a punch, I don't think much of it. With Golovkin, though, it's completely different. He makes you think about every punch you receive. It stings you. It hurts badly. I don't know how he does it, but it's horrible. If I got the call to go spar him again, I'd think about it for a few seconds and then probably say no."

Some fighters who have faced Golovkin, however, are less reluctant about reconvening with the reigning WBA middleweight titleholder. Take Ireland's Andy Lee, a 6-foot-2 southpaw who boxed Golovkin at the 2003 World Amateur Championships in Bangkok. It was the Round of 16 stage of the competition and Lee was just 19. Golovkin was 21.

"I had never fought anybody with that type of style," he recalled. "He was an aggressive counterpuncher. He'd pressure me with feints and, when I thought he was going to punch, I'd try to counter him and then he'd slip and counter me.

"He was very intelligent and very intense. It's a strange combination. He had great footwork and a variety of punches for an amateur. It wouldn't all be straight punches and tippy-tappy stuff. He was well-schooled and could throw every shot.

"He was also a strong puncher at that stage and was knocking a lot of people out. He knocked out Lucian Bute. He seemed to have it all, really – footwork and aggression. I was pretty disappointed with the loss until I sat back and saw him beat everybody else and win gold. I realized then I had lost to the best."

Rather than intimidate or discourage, Lee's brief dalliance with Golovkin only served to offer him an insight, a taste of what should come if the two meet again as pros.

"People assume that the best thing to do is box him for 12 rounds and stay away," he said. "But boxing him for 12 rounds would be very hard to do. He's not a one-dimensional slugger. You can't just expect him to come unstuck when he fights a boxer with good skills and defense. He's beaten all of those guys in the amateurs. In terms of feints, footwork, distance and clever counterpunching, he's better than most guys in boxing.

"I think you just have to go to war with him and try to take him out early. It has to be a dogfight. You can't stand off and respect his power. Once you do that, he knows you're beaten. I'd prepare for a three-round fight and just go for it. If I throw enough bombs, at some point something has got to land. Either I'd knock him out or he'd knock me out.

'HE MAKES YOU THINK ABOUT EVERY PUNCH YOU RECEIVE. IT STINGS YOU. IT HURTS BADLY. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DOES IT, BUT IT'S HORRIBLE.'
— SERGEJ ROZVADOVSKIJ

"Also, I wouldn't respect him. Yes, he warrants his reputation but, at the same time, he's benefiting from it. Guys give him too much respect. They see his smile and want to be his friend. You look in their eyes and can tell they don't believe they can win."

When England's Matthew Macklin was presented with the option of facing Golovkin in June 2013, he put any lingering doubt to one side and puffed out his chest in defiance. "I wasn't going to run away from anybody," he said. "It came down to pride. I'd rather have fought someone else, but if the fight was offered, I was going to take it. I'm not going to shy away."

The HBO slot provided Macklin with valuable exposure and a career-high payday but, he said, he had more than Golovkin working against him. He hadn't fought in a year, was battling hand injuries and he didn't see eye to eye with his trainer at the time, James "Buddy" McGirt.

The disagreement centered on the right way to go about decoding Golovkin.

"Buddy wanted me to box Golovkin like he might have done but I argued that I needed to fight him more like Ricky Hatton fought Kostya Tszyu," said Macklin. "I needed to be there on his chest and smother him.

"Remember, Buddy is very knowledgeable on boxing but he's a purist. He was a great stylist. The only chance I had with Golovkin was to go to war with him. But you've got to do that from the first bell. You can't think of doing that in Round 3 when you're already battered, bloodied and bruised."

Macklin was all of these by the time the round-card girl holding up a big "3" had sashayed the four corners and dipped under the top rope. About a minute later he was crippled by a left hook to the ribs and the fight was over.

"There are a lot of things you can't see with Golovkin," he said. "His judging of distance, his timing, his balance, his patience. He's so well-schooled and technically sound that his balance is spot on. He's never overstretched. His feet are never too close together or too wide apart. He's always in a position to punch and he's very relaxed, which means he conserves energy.

"Obviously he hits very hard but he's also very accurate and knows what shots to throw at the right time. He finds all the right places with his shots."

Macklin was mercifully spared having his senses scrambled by a

ALEXIS CUAREZMA/GETTY IMAGES

Don't let that nice smile fool you; this man is a wrecking machine.

head shot – "He never caught me clean with one, thank God" – but his ribs took a beating that night.

"His shots were accurate and you knew you couldn't afford to take a massive shot clean," said Macklin. "The best shot he got me with broke my ribs. That was the most painful body shot I've ever taken by far.

"I was waiting for the left hook to the head because he'd thrown it a few times after the uppercut and he went downstairs while my elbows were high. It was a good move by him. I appreciate the way he set me up for it. It broke two rib bones. It paralyzed me. If I could have got up, I would have, but I couldn't move."

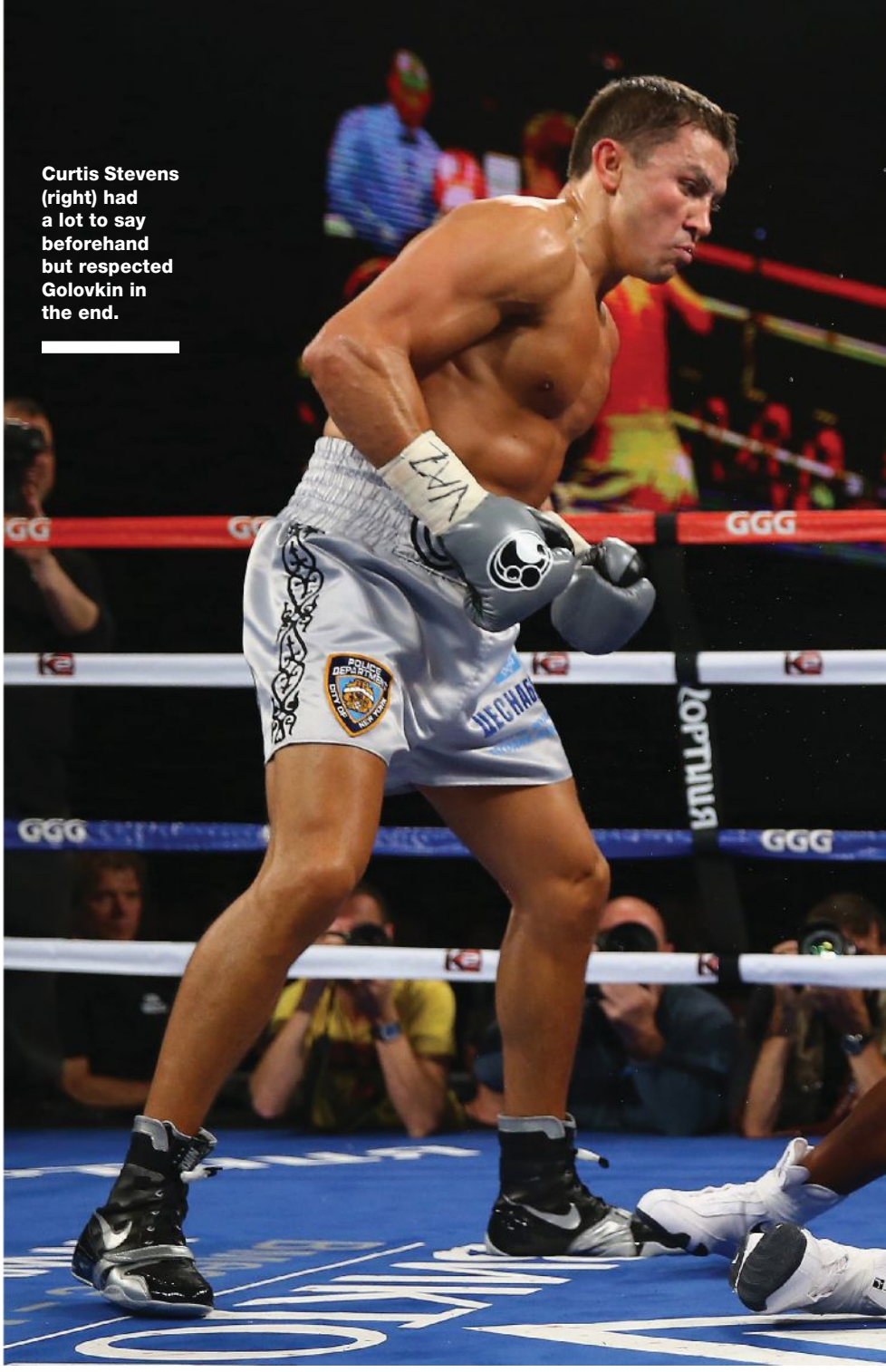
Macklin talks as if he might one day study Golovkin and incorporate some of what he experienced into some of what he produces in the future. It was that kind of lesson.

"What got me was how much pressure he was able to exert with just his presence alone," he said. "His footwork stood out. He could cut the ring off so well and so quickly. He'd put a whole load of pressure on you without doing much.

"Also, you're aware that he's a big puncher so you're burning more nervous energy and your movements are more urgent. You don't glide effortlessly when you're in with Golovkin. It's tiring when you're wary and anxious of someone's power.

"Even though there was nothing heavy in the first round, I was still cut, I was still on the back foot and I was still working much harder than I wanted to. I then looked at him and he looked like he hadn't got out of first gear."

Brownsville's Curtis "Showtime" Stevens has never been a respecter of reputations. It's what gives him his edge. It's what gives him his own intimidation factor. So, when he stepped up to challenge Golovkin in



Curtis Stevens (right) had a lot to say beforehand but respected Golovkin in the end.

November 2013, he'd seemingly won half the battle.

"It wasn't a decision to show him no respect, that's just the way I am," he said. "That's my personality. He had to *earn* my respect. You can't go in there respecting him or wanting to be his friend."

Stevens engaged and trash-talked Golovkin at the press conference. He approached the fight differently from others. But that didn't prevent Golovkin from dropping the New Yorker in the second round.

"He knocks people out with one punch so I'm not going to say he doesn't have one-punch power, but it didn't feel that way with me," said Stevens. "He has heavy hands, like a thumping power.

"When I got put down in the second round, he hit me with one hook and I rolled back up and my right hand was down so he came with another one. He caught me by surprise. I thought, 'Oh, this mother f---er got me.' I wasn't badly hurt, though."

Whatever the effects of the punch, it certainly threw Stevens off his game plan. It made him wary. It acted as a warning.

"With Golovkin, I was just thinking too much," he said. "I wanted to land the perfect shot. And, by overthinking and looking to land the perfect shot, I took too many shots. I wanted to show him no respect in general and to just overwhelm him. That was my game plan. But I noticed in the first couple of rounds he wasn't really stepping forward. I'd throw a shot and he'd kind of lean back. I wasn't catching him the way I wanted and now I *really* wanted to try and knock his ass out. But I was looking for one shot rather than putting them together."

Respect for Golovkin came gradually. It seeped from Stevens when he was decked in the second round and then poured from him at the end of the eighth when he was pulled out of the fight on his stool. "He is very relaxed and calm," said Stevens. "He cuts off the ring very well. He's also very, very poised."

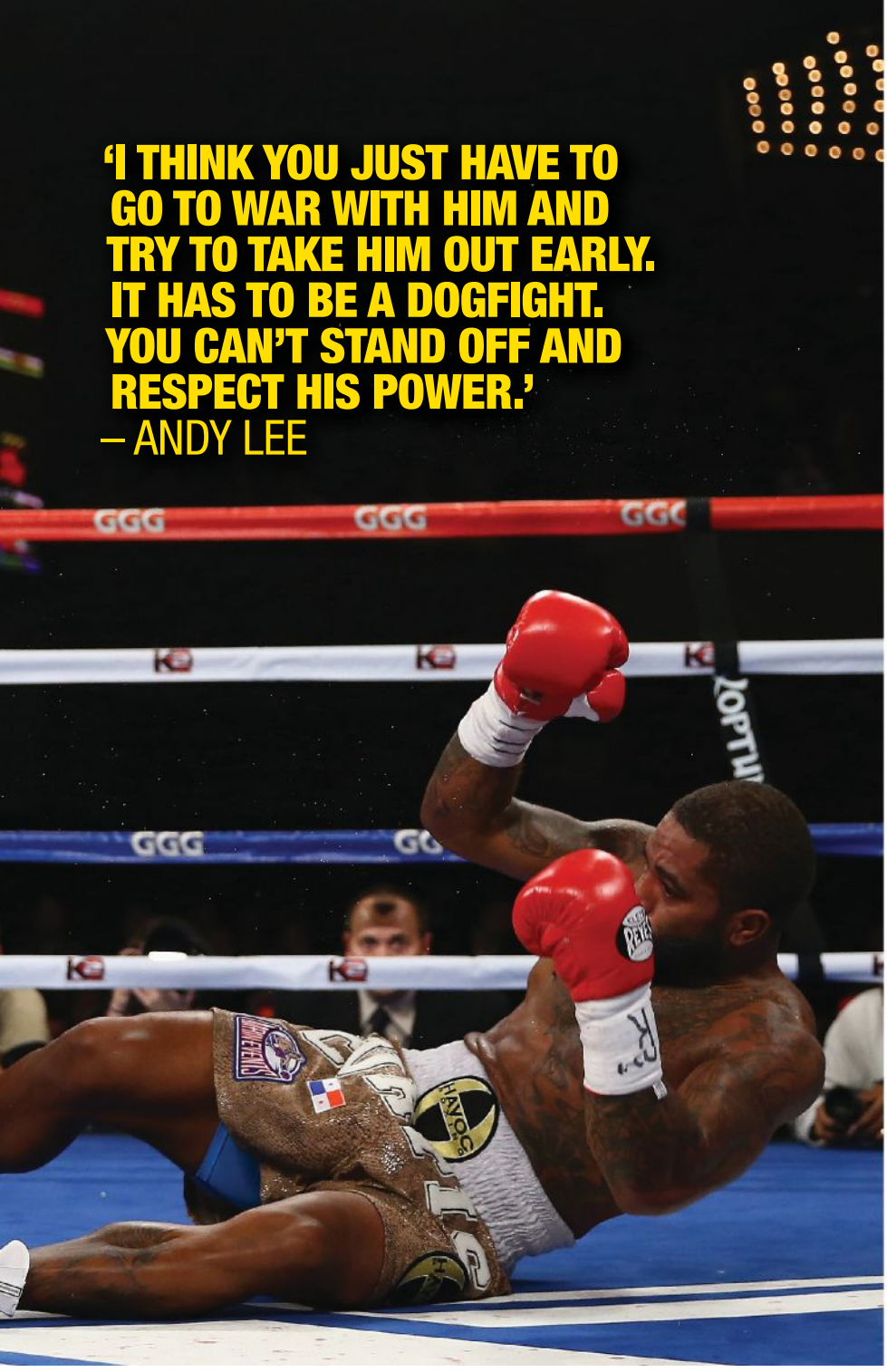
That's not to say Golovkin cannot be beaten, though. Stevens scoffs at that assertion.

"You've just got to take it to him," he said. "When I was taking it to him, he was backing up. But then I started backing up on him at some points. I needed to keep pushing forward. They knew what type of power I possess so they were more wary of his ass getting hit. When I went on my back foot, he gained heart and confidence."

Most experts and, indeed, fighters believe that the middleweights – the likes of Stevens, Macklin and Lee – will be unable to test and defeat Golovkin anytime soon. His real challenges, they say, might one day arrive in the super middleweight division, eight pounds up, where champions like Andre Ward and Carl Froch reside.

One super middleweight who

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



recently sampled Golovkin’s threat in sparring is Groves, the former British, Commonwealth and European champion, who traveled to Big Bear, California, in August to experience the myth and legend firsthand.

“He’s definitely riding a massive wave right now and that wave is becoming a tsunami,” said Groves, who completed two sessions of four four-minute rounds with Golovkin. “He’s so comfortable and composed in the ring. It radiates off of him. He understands how good he is.

“I’ve been around other fighters who are very self-assured and confident but never anyone who is at ease as much as Gennady. There’s nothing about him that seems fake or for show.”

Then came the punches.

“Oh, he was definitely heavy-handed,” said Groves. “He’s got punch power you need to respect. It’s the sort of punch power that meant if you walked onto one, you’d probably go. But, at the same time, he has a capable and knowing eye that allows him to creep into range and touch you with light shots to keep you busy and set up the power shots. For a guy who has a lot of thinking time, it will be interesting to know whether he *needs* a lot of thinking time.

“But his timing and accuracy were exceptional. He’d pick the right shots to throw at the right time. There were moments when we were sparring and he’d find gaps around the back of the elbow and bring something up through the middle.

“When I spar I can be a touch lazy and that’s something you can *never* be with him. You can never give him a free shot. It can quickly escalate into a three-punch combination and then the fight’s over.”

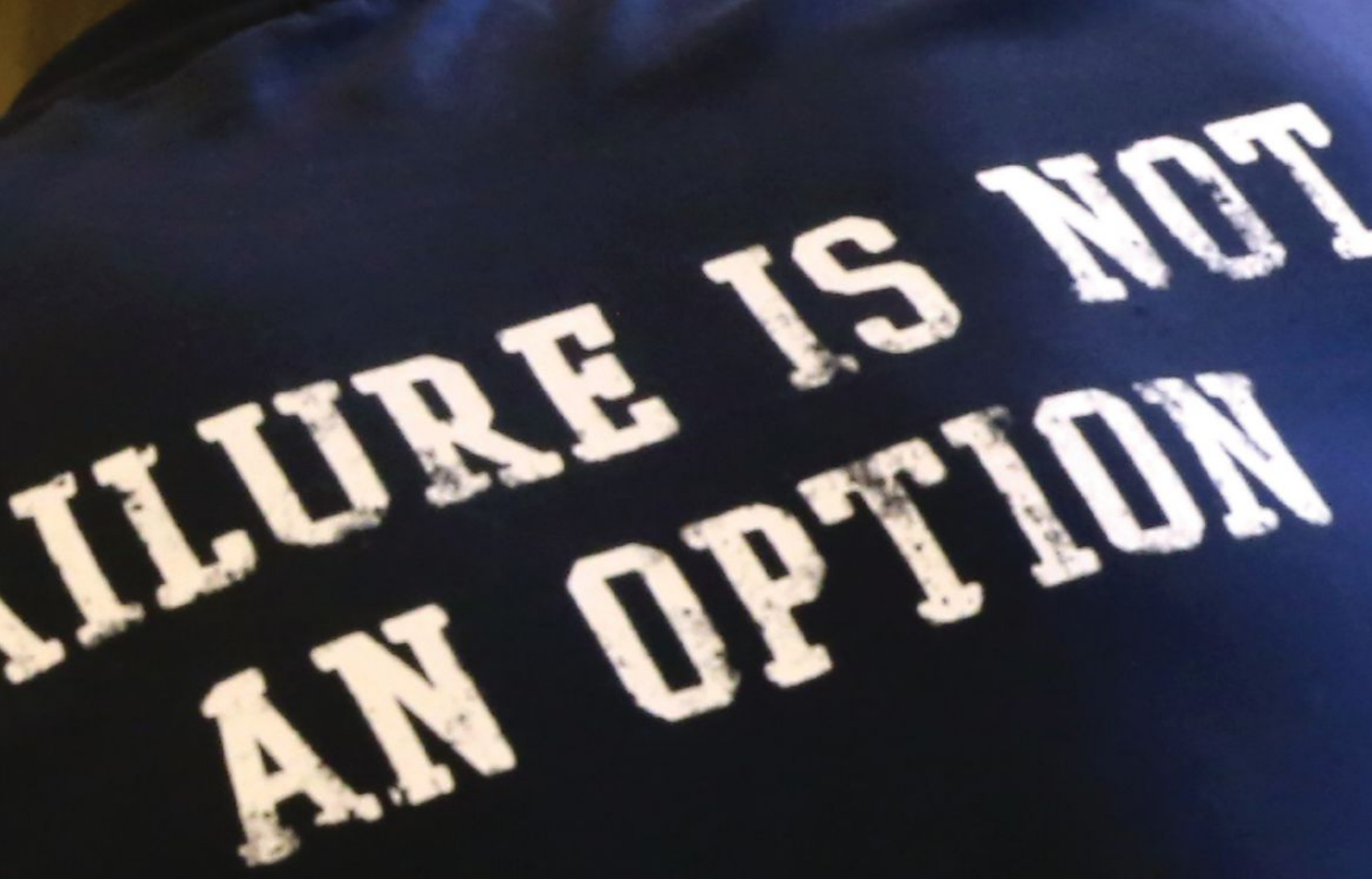
Groves was already speaking about Golovkin as though he was a prospective opponent. Far from scared, though, he was simply making considered mental notes. His latest Rubik’s Cube.

“He’s not the sort of guy you would run from because he cuts the ring off very well and has so much time to work,” said Groves. “I think to beat him you’ve got to have natural ability, enough punch power to get his respect and you have to be willing to sit in the pocket with him at times because he closes the range so well. You will *have* to punch with him, whether that’s block and fire or getting there first and stepping around him.

“If you are going to go long range, he’s there to be hit. You can land jabs on him and you can land right hands and hooks on him. But he almost doesn’t mind getting hit because he’s got that freakish punch power.”

Freakish. It was a word used by all five of the men in relation to Golovkin. Freakish power, freakish demeanor, freakish ability and so on. Freaked out, however, is what most opponents feel when facing him.

Wladimir Klitschko hasn't been seriously tested for a decade.



MASTER OF EXECUTION

A PERFECT PUNCH, UNFAVORABLE REFEREE OR FIREFIGHT COULD CONCEIVABLY BRING DOWN WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO. MORE LIKELY, AS LENNOX LEWIS SAID: 'THE HEAVYWEIGHTS ARE JUST WAITING FOR HIM TO RETIRE.'

By **Gordon Marino**

Wladimir Klitschko has been the most dominant champion in boxing. Unlike pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather Jr., who has had a couple of tough tussles, Klitschko has not been tested since 2005, when he peeled himself off of the canvas three times to win a unanimous decision over Sam Peter and a slice of the heavyweight title.

Though he is finally getting some props – he's No. 2 on THE RING's pound-for-pound list – the over-achieving Ukrainian remains widely underappreciated, especially in the U.S. Many boxing experts despise his MMA-style of pound, ground and hold. Others believe his dominance only testifies to today's anemic field of heavyweights. But like his fistic work or not, there is no denying that Dr. Steelhammer currently seems all but unbeatable.

It was, of course, Emanuel Steward who helped fit the pieces together again after Corrie Sanders' left hand seemed to shatter Klitschko's career and confidence. Just as he did with Lennox Lewis after his knockout losses, Steward helped to mend both Klitschko's

ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

boxing style and his psyche.

A few months before his death, in October 2012, Steward talked about one of his prized pupils and favorite people.

"I really worry about keeping Wladimir motivated," the Hall of Fame trainer said. "To be honest, there is really no one out there right now that can give him a real fight. Wladimir loves challenges so I have started challenging him to beat Joe Louis' record of 25 title defenses. And I really think that he can do it." Klitschko is No. 2 on the list now with 22 successful defenses over two reigns, including 17 in his current reign.

But Emanuel had little reason to be concerned about his charge's level of motivation. When I chatted with Klitschko a few weeks before his fight with Kubrat Pulev was pushed back to Nov. 15, I jabbed him about a possible matchup with Deontay Wilder.

Always cordial and open, Klitschko's guard suddenly went up. "I have one fight and one fight only on my mind," he snapped, "and I will not talk or think about any others." You might catch Klitschko distracted by the bloodshed in Ukraine but you will never find him unprepared. The oversized boxer does not underestimate any challenger.

Fighters creeping up on 40 have to address the creeping shadow of retirement. Klitschko is 38 and 65 fights into his 18-year professional career. But for Klitschko, the thrill is far from gone.

"I feel great," he said. "I love boxing. I love the training and the fights. I feel like I could go on forever, though," he joked, "maybe not as long as Hopkins."

Steward's understudy and Klitschko's current trainer, Johnathon Banks, won't disagree with his fighter.

"The two most dominant fighters in boxing are Floyd Mayweather and Wladimir Klitschko," he said. "Is it any mistake that whatever else you can say about these two guys they share one thing in common? Both of them treat their bodies like a temple. There are a lot of fighters who can get themselves in condition to win a title. But there are very few who can stay in condition to remain at the top."

"A lot of people don't realize it," Banks continued, "but over the long run there is a big difference between facing someone who can get himself in condition but another to deal with fighters like Floyd or Wladimir who never get out of condition."

What is the engine that keeps Klitschko working so hard and consistently? For one, he finds a sense of peace in the realm of sweat. The gym is an isle of tranquility for him. But there is more to his work ethic. Klitschko confided that fear keeps alive the fire in his belly.

"I'm absolutely terrified of losing," he said. "When I lost the last time I felt so bad that you wouldn't believe it. It was terrible. I don't ever want to feel that way again."

But aside from his mental muscle and physical fettle, how sweet is Dr. Steelhammer's sweet science?

Blessed with an 81-inch reach, Klitschko is possessed of a quick and concussive jab that belongs in the Jab Hall of Fame. He does not telegraph it by bringing his elbow out and he can easily double and triple it up. Once his jab is cranking, he starts turning it over into a hook, which brings his foe into the crosshairs of his nuclear straight right hand. When Klitschko successfully flips the switch on his right, it usually means lights out for the recipient.

Klitschko boasts an 80 percent knockout ratio – 66 fights, 53 knockouts. George Foreman once said that Klitschko has the most powerful right hand he had seen since, well, the right of George Foreman.

Klitschko is like the Lombardi Green Bay Packers, nothing complicated but a perfect master of execution. At some level, the Klitschko formula is basic: 1, 2, 3. Jab, left hook, right hand. But it is not quite as simple as it seems.

Asked to describe what is best about Klitschko's boxing repertoire, Banks surprisingly insisted, "His footwork. He practices footwork all the time. He goes right. He goes left. In and out, you can't time him. Everyone talks about Mayweather's defense, how little Floyd gets hit. But when was the last time you saw Wladimir get tagged or take a beating? He is one of the best defensive fighters in boxing."

JOHN MACDOUGALL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kubrat Pulev (on the canvas) had credentials but no answer to what Klitschko brings.

Klitschko holds a Ph.D. and understands the truth of Bob Dylan's words, "He not busy being born is busy dying," or in boxing parlance, "He not busy improving will soon be losing."

Steward once said that more than any other fighter he has worked with, "Wladimir loves studying technique and ways to improve his boxing." Pressed as to where Klitschko needed to up his game, Steward said: "One of the things Wladimir has been working on is throwing more uppercuts. He is very big and everyone tries to get inside on him. Most guys are smaller. The uppercut is perfect.

"Wladimir throws the uppercut in sparring very well. But he is such a perfectionist and it is hard to get him to use it in a fight. But he is starting to."

Klitschko is always in inner conversation with his late boxing mentor. "One of things that Manny was working on was trying to get me to stop hesitating. To jump in when I land something," he said.

Of course, the big guy is not known for big whiskers. I suggested that his terror of losing might have something to do with his hesitation. Klitschko conceded, "Maybe."

But is this power forward of a pugilist really unbeatable? Lennox Lewis doesn't think so. After joking that he had already fought the man in the film "Oceans Eleven," Lewis offered his assessment.

"Look, I have a lot of respect for Wladimir," Lewis said. "I don't see anyone out there right now who can beat him. Actually, I think the heavyweights are just waiting for him to retire. But to be a great champion you have to be able to do everything; you have to be a master of every aspect of the game. Wladimir has a great jab and can punch but as soon as someone gets close he grabs and holds them. He has never shown that he can fight on the inside.

"If I were fighting him, I know Manny would have been yelling, 'Get in the street.' Forget boxing. Make it a fight. I don't think Klitschko could have handled that. I would have knocked him out."

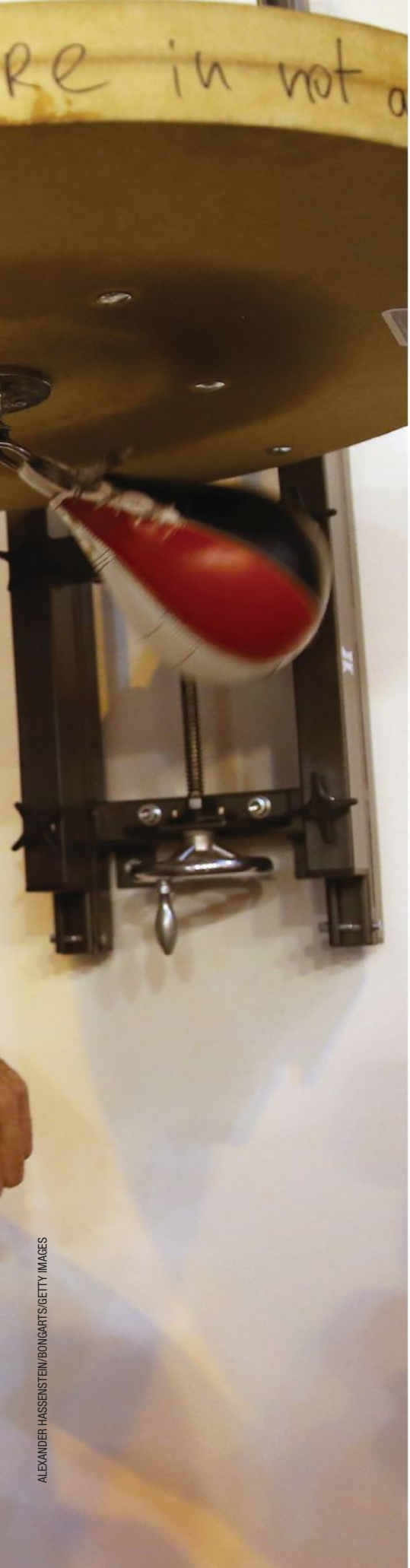
David Haye was virtually shut out by Klitschko in 2011.

"Klitschko is unnaturally strong," he said. "When he clinches you, there is nowhere to go. Impossible to punch out, pull away or wrestle with him. His speed of foot is also impressive. He gets out of the danger zone very fast. His weak point is his punch resistance. I managed to tag him on the chin a few times and every time I could feel he was dazed.

"I'd love the opportunity to right the wrongs of my last weak effort. I got it very wrong once the bell rang and I'd have a few more tricks up my sleeve. I know I can take his best shot on the chin and I know he can't take mine.

"But," continued Haye, "the only realistic strategy anyone can have to beat Klitschko is to get a fair, neutral referee who will not allow him to hold, grab and lean on his opponents. And if this doesn't happen, I fear he is unbeatable."

Klitschko is motivated at least in part by a fear of failure.



ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

When he is backed to the ropes, Klitschko often squares up and becomes an octopus. Banks sees that as a natural strategy.

"Sure, there are bouts in which he has held too much," Banks said. "Like the Povetkin fight. But take any big man versus a smaller man, like Ali and Frazier; the smaller guy has the advantage on the inside. And of course the other guy is going to tie him up if the shorter guy is not working.

"I have sparred many rounds with Wladimir. Trust me, he can fight on the inside. He just doesn't choose to. But he can make adjustments as well as anyone and if he has to fight inside, he will."

While Wladimir is known for his strength, Foreman was second to none in power ratings. He was asked how he would have approached a Klitschko showdown.

"In my first career," he said, "I would have just gone out, pinned him against the ropes and winged those big wide shots. But in my second career, it would have been different."

Taking a page from his onetime trainer Archie Moore, Foreman elaborated. "I would have brought my right foot up closer to my left and made myself like a bowling ball," he said. "Just rolling forward like I did against (Evander) Holyfield in the middle rounds. I would not have tried to jab with Klitschko. You simply can't beat him in a jab war! But when I got about a foot away, I would have started throwing punches from every angle."

'I HAVE SPARRED MANY ROUNDS WITH WLADIMIR. TRUST ME, HE CAN FIGHT ON THE INSIDE. HE JUST DOESN'T CHOOSE TO. BUT HE CAN MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AS WELL AS ANYONE AND IF HE HAS TO FIGHT INSIDE, HE WILL.'
— JOHNATHON BANKS

For a heavyweight around 6 feet tall, victory might require a Hail Mary shot out of nowhere. Klitschko does drop his left and can leave himself open. However, he also moves to the right very well and away from most of his rivals' power lane. The one-punch strategy aside, a heavyweight of, say, Bermane Stiverne's stature would need the ability to avoid Klitschko's bear hug, get inside and explode with heavy ordnance. A hybrid of Joe Frazier and Mike Tyson might be just the prescription to defeat Dr. Steelhammer.

Yet, for a super-sized heavyweight with Klitschko-type height and wingspan, the formula might be different. Former basketball standout Wilder is 6 feet 6½ inches tall and has a slightly longer reach than Klitschko. The Bronze Bomber (32-0, 32 knockouts) remains untested but the impact of his right hand on the brain is beyond question.

Wilder has worked as a sparring mate for Klitschko. His soft-spoken boxing tutor, Mark Breland, was not averse to pondering a Wilder vs. Klitschko contest.

Like the rest of the boxing fraternity, Breland insisted: "You have to take away Wladimir's jab. Unlike a lot of the other smaller heavyweights, Deontay can jab with Wladimir. He would have to make Wladimir back up because Wladimir can't fight going in reverse. People ask me if Deontay can take a punch. Honestly I don't know; no one has really hit him yet. But I do know that when he hits someone, they go down."

Breland drew breath and concluded: "But to be perfectly honest, I think this fight would be a matter of who got to who first." RING

A DISTURBING SUCCESS STORY

JERMAIN TAYLOR HAS RE-CAPTURED A WORLD TITLE BUT A PREVIOUS BRAIN INJURY AND A RECENT SHOOTING LEAVE HIM BENEATH A DARK CLOUD

By **Norm Frauenheim**

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Jermain Taylor is no longer the bright light he was earlier in his career.

There was a time when the word "undisputed" was attached to the titles next to Jermain Taylor's name. But it wasn't there for long. Not that it is for anybody. Nothing is more temporary, or more targeted. After all, there are always disputes. It just wouldn't be the fight game without them. They define the business.

Divide it, too.

Taylor's perilous fall and ongoing comeback amid controversy over a brain-bleed suffered in 2009 and a felony arrest in August in an alleged shooting exemplify how deeply contentious and potentially dangerous that divide can be. It's full of crazy challenges that are never part of any career plan.

Yet they are always there, unforeseen and poised to strike suddenly with a powerful reminder about just how vulnerable any title, any champion, really is.

Undisputed has never meant unchallenged but it sure looked that way in 2005 when Taylor had all of the pieces to the middleweight puzzle after beating Bernard Hopkins twice.

"After those Hopkins fights, that was the highlight of my career," Taylor told RingTV.com in October before he regained a piece of the title in a decision over Sam Soliman that was as messy as it was unanimous. "I reached the peak of my career. I didn't care about anything else. I hate to say that but that's the truth."

From that peak, it was hard to see what might bring down Taylor. He wasn't looking down, anyway. He was only looking up at everything that seemed to await him. It was blinding. It was also an illusion. But that wasn't surprising. Hindsight never is. Neither is human nature.

Successive decisions over the brilliant tactician Hopkins were unprecedented. It emboldened Taylor. When he said he didn't care about anything else, however, he

conceded defeat didn't even seem possible. After beating Hopkins, he didn't think he could lose. In the intoxicating wake of those triumphs, it looked as if Taylor would succeed a fading generation personified by Oscar De La Hoya and Roy Jones Jr.

Then there was his first real taste of popularity. A shy kid who grew up with a slight stutter, Taylor was a sudden celebrity at home in Arkansas. It's a state known for Bill and Hillary Clinton, country-and-western icon Johnny Cash and Walmart founder Sam Walton. Sonny Liston was born there but the late heavyweight champ didn't begin his cursed career until after he left for Missouri. Arkansas knew more about Razorbacks than the ring. But that changed with Taylor, who stayed at home, won a bronze medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and wore the red Razorback logo on his trunks.

Even then-Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee noticed. Huckabee declared a state-wide "Jermain Taylor Day" in 2006 before he defended two of his titles in a unanimous decision over Kassim Ouma in Little Rock. But a quick, seemingly unobstructed ride to the top came to an abrupt halt, ending faster than it began.

Maybe the early signs of decline were there in 2006, which included a draw with Winky Wright, who battered Taylor's left eye until the swelling closed it. It was a target for future punches, some that Taylor never saw coming. Or maybe Kelly Pavlik set it in motion in 2007 with a seventh-round TKO. The stoppage was devastating and perhaps a warning sign for what would happen later.

What followed is a matter of record, simple and stark. Taylor moved up in weight, from 160 pounds to 168, and into the path of bigger power.

First, Carl Froch scored a 12th-round TKO in March 2009. Seven months later in Berlin, in the first round of the Super Six Tournament, Taylor suffered another 12th-round stoppage, this time with six seconds left in the bout when Arthur Abraham landed a violent right that sent Taylor crashing onto the canvas. Taylor walked out of the ring without assistance but he couldn't remember the punch, or the round. He complained of a headache. He went to the hospital, where bleeding on the brain was found.

Then it looked as if Taylor's career was history. It wasn't. Twenty-six months later, Taylor's comeback began. Initially, it generated some predictable controversy.

Taylor underwent a battery of tests at the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic's Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, where a study of boxers has been underway for the last few years. Taylor was cleared to fight. The Nevada State Athletic Commission licensed him in September 2011.

However, former Nevada ringside physician Dr. Margaret Goodman condemned the Nevada Commission for granting the license by a 5-0 vote. She told THE RING then that the commission was playing "Russian roulette" with Taylor's life. Taylor, she said, had "shown a predisposition to cerebral hemorrhage." He had also shown he could not "adequately handle a punch," the Las Vegas neurologist said.

Taylor has not fought in Nevada since he was licensed there. However, it's believed that a license from the world's most recognized commission opened the door to getting licensed in other states. His comeback at middleweight flew under the radar in Cabazon, California; Biloxi, Mississippi; Saint Charles, Missouri, and San Antonio with a TKO of Jessie Nicklow, a decision over Caleb Truax, a knockout of Raul Munoz and stoppage of Juan Carlos Candelo.

It wasn't until Soliman on Oct. 8 in Biloxi that Taylor re-captured media attention and re-ignited controversy,

A CROOKED ROAD

Jermain Taylor has experienced a number of notable ups and some glaring downs over the past decade and a half. Here's a look.

Sept. 29, 2000
Wins the junior middleweight bronze medal at the Sydney Olympics

July 16, 2005
Defeats Bernard Hopkins by a split decision to become undisputed middleweight champ. Defeats Hopkins by a unanimous decision in the rematch five months later.

Sept. 29, 2007
Stopped in the seventh round by Kelly Pavlik, his first loss. Loses a unanimous decision in the rematch five months later.

April 25, 2009
Stopped in the 12th and final round by Carl Froch in an attempt to win a 168-pound title.

Oct. 17, 2009
Stopped again in the final round by Arthur Abraham in the first stage of the Super Six World Boxing Classic, his first fight since the Froch loss. Afterward, an MRI reveals bleeding on his brain. He is told he could never fight again.

Sept. 30, 2011
Nevada State Athletic Commission grants him a license to box after a battery of tests show no abnormalities in his brain, which opens the door for him to return to action.

Dec. 30, 2011
Stops Jessie Nicklow in eight rounds in Cabazon, California, his first fight in more than two years.

Aug. 26, 2014
Arrested at his home on first degree battery and aggravated assault charges after allegedly shooting his cousin and spends a night in jail. The shooting victim survives.

October 2014
Video of Taylor firing a gun and saying, "I'll never lose to another white boy," circulates on the internet.

Oct. 8, 2014
Defeats Sam Soliman by a unanimous decision to win the IBF middleweight title, seven years after he last wore a belt.

ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor has been through a great deal since he celebrated his second victory over Bernard Hopkins in 2005.

mostly because the IBF's 160-pound title was at stake. With it and behind-the-scenes power-broker Al Haymon in Taylor's corner, the prospect of bigger bouts and more dangerous opponents loom.

For Goodman, it's like watching that game of Russian roulette play out in the way she thought it might.

"I wish Jermain the best but the issue is fairly straightforward," said Goodman, also an author with a new novel, "Death in Vegas." "We know of issues where fighters who have suffered a prior hemorrhage later die from a cerebral hemorrhage if they continue a career."

In March 2012, Leal, a Mexican junior featherweight with a wife and son, was taken from the ring on a stretcher after Russian Evgeny Gradovich knocked him out in San Antonio. Leal fought five times after that, all in Mexico. In the fifth fight, on Oct. 23, 2013, Leal died in San Diego three days after suffering brain trauma in a knockout loss to Raul Hirales in Cabo San Lucas.

"Frankie was removed from a Texas ring on a stretcher, hospitalized for a few days and resumed his career several months later to only die in a fight in Mexico," Goodman said. "There is no research that indicates a fighter who has suffered a cerebral hemorrhage is at no greater risk than one who has not.

"It doesn't exist and it is all conjecture by university specialists, most of whom have never witnessed a fighter dying in the ring. Furthermore, it's similar to the older fighter. Do you create situations where a fighter who has suffered a bleed fights a fighter who is less likely to hurt him or her? So, yes, I worry about Jermain fighting a big puncher."

Bigger punchers already have been mentioned. The biggest is Gennady Golovkin, the unbeaten knockout specialist with 28 stoppages in his 31 victories. K2's Tom Loeffler, who handles Golovkin's career, approached

Soliman's management about a fight with Golovkin before GGG's victory over Marco Antonio Rubio. Soliman had the IBF title. Now it belongs to Taylor. And, yes, Loeffler said, Golovkin would fight him.

"Absolutely," Loeffler said. "It's Gennady's goal to unify the middleweight division. Since [Taylor] won the IBF title, he would definitely be on the radar screen."

But Loeffler is aware of the potential hurdles.

"Sure," he said. "There's no question that his previous medical condition would be a concern. It really wouldn't be our decision. But if he is medically cleared and he has a title, Gennady would want to unify those titles. I mean, there are more attractive fights, like a Miguel Cotto unification fight.

"But if a chance at unification is there, yes, Gennady would be interested."

HBO, which has been broadcasting Golovkin's bouts, would still have to agree and there is some doubt about whether it would. Mounting controversy might scare off other networks, as well, although ESPN carried the Taylor-Soliman fighter.

There's also some doubt about whether some of the major states would license Taylor. Larry Hazzard, who is back as chairman of the New Jersey Athletic Control Board, toldNorthJersey.com that he would not have. Hazzard would have rejected Taylor's application, he said, because of his felony arrest on charges that he shot his cousin at Taylor's home in Maumelle, a Little Rock suburb, on August 26.

Taylor was formally charged on Nov. 19 in Little Rock with felonies, one for battery and the other for making a terroristic threat. If convicted on both, he faces up to 26 years in prison. Taylor's attorneys challenged the legality of the arrest. They filed a motion asking that evidence collected during the arrest be barred.

NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Hazzard also said he would have to further evaluate Taylor's medical condition.

If not New Jersey, however, there's still Mississippi, which licensed Taylor to fight after the alleged shooting. There's also Missouri, California, Texas and Nevada, the last of which which licensed him after the brain bleed.

Five weeks after his decision over a hobbled Soliman, there was still no indication about Taylor's plans. The legal process surrounding the criminal charges was ongoing.Taylor promoter Lou DiBella told media that he would only do what he and Haymon thought was best for Taylor, now 36. Better might mean the safest way to earn some money.

DiBella, Taylor's original promoter, has said repeatedly that he cares deeply about him. DiBella left Taylor after the brain bleed but rejoined him for the comeback. Before the Soliman bout, DiBella said he wouldn't put Taylor in against a big puncher, a "King Kong."

Soliman wasn't a big puncher. Isn't King Kong. Still, Soliman might have won a decision if not for a knee injury that his manager and attorney, Kurt Emhoff, says happened in the fourth round. The Aussie led on two scorecards through six. On the third card, it was even. On a bad right knee, Soliman was knocked down four times – in the seventh, eighth, ninth and 11th rounds. On a good knee,

Taylor had a horrible 2009. He was stopped by Carl Froch in April (pictured here) and Arthur Abraham in October, after which he didn't fight for two years.

who knows? Emhoff thinks Soliman deserves a second chance. A couple of weeks after the decision, he was seeking a rematch.

"A rematch may be a possibility but Jermain has a number of options and potential obligations that their team has to sort out," Emhoff said in an email in early November.

Another potential option is Peter Quillin, a big puncher nicknamed Kid Chocolate. If Soliman is at the low side of the power scale, Quillin is at the opposite end. Above all, Quillin is considered a possible opponent for Taylor because Haymon advises both.

"I know that Choc is a possibility for Jermain," Emhoff said. "It's really up to Team Taylor at this point what fights they want to make. Choc is a tough fight for anyone at 160. He's long and he hits hard."

Following Haymon inevitably leads to "Money," the nickname for the best fighter on his roster of clients as well as any pound-for-pound list. But is Floyd Mayweather Jr. a real possibility for Taylor? It makes sense only because it would allow the welterweight and junior middleweight champ to win a title in a sixth weight class and add to his legacy. If he wants to add a 160-pound title, a fight with a vulnerable Taylor might be the easiest way to get one.

"I don't think it's crazy but Jermain is a big middleweight," Emhoff said "It made more sense for Floyd to fight Sam, who is more around Floyd's height. But Floyd looked bored to me in both of the (Marcos) Maidana fights. Stepping up to 160 might get him engaged again."

What it might do to Taylor is hard to say. That question is there for as long his comeback continues.

"Of course, we thought about it," Emhoff said. "A brain bleed is one of the most serious injuries that a boxer can experience. I tried to get as much information on it as I could before we made any decisions on the fight.

"The fact that Team Taylor took as much precaution as they did in bringing him back gave us some comfort. Jermain went through about as rigorous a battery of tests as any boxer in the history of the sport. Maybe (Evander) Holyfield, when he had the heart problem, went through something similar.

"Jermain got tested by not only the Mayo Clinic but also the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Brain Health in Nevada and then had to face questioning by a five-doctor panel at the Nevada State Athletic Commission before he got licensed. That's pretty thorough.

"I know the counter to that is, well, (Muhammad) Ali got the OK from the Mayo Clinic as well and look at him. I'd like to think that we have learned a lot more about head injuries in the 30-plus years since (Larry) Holmes-Ali. I'm sure that's why the Nevada Commission went to the lengths it did before it licensed Jermain.

"But even with all of that, you still hold your breath a little when Jermain fights. There will always be a concern with him."

Controversy, too. About that, there's no dispute.

LANDSLIDE

SERGEY KOVALEV'S COMPREHENSIVE VICTORY OVER **BERNARD HOPKINS** SIGNALS A SEISMIC SHIFT IN THE LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION

By **Bernard Fernandez**

It apparently was a week for landslides, of mandates for sweeping reform. Four days earlier, the Republican Party had increased its majority in the House of Representatives and also wrested control of the Senate. Election Day would seem to have indicated a seismic shift of political power in the legislative branch of the United States government, at least for the near future.

But even the GOP's bonanza at the polls paled in comparison to the overwhelming vote for Sergey Kovalev in his light heavyweight unification showdown with the nearly 50-year-old Bernard Hopkins on Nov. 8. Oh, sure, there were only three people officially marking scorecards – those would be judges Lawrence Layton,

Sergey Kovalev surprised some by using his skills, not his power, to dominate Bernard Hopkins.

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Carlos Ortiz and Clark Sammartino – but they submitted tallies favoring the Russian import by Grand Canyonesque margins of 120-106, 120-107 and 120-107. And if the 8,545 on-site spectators in Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall and HBO viewers could cast ballots, no doubt those also would reflect the opinion of the appointed officials.

The punch statistics compiled by CompuBox, which aren't always an accurate indicator of what transpires inside the ropes, were no less overwhelming: Kovalev landed 166 of 585 (28 percent) to 65 of 195 (33 percent) for Hopkins, with the gap in power shots (121 of 341, 35 percent, to 40 of 111, 36 percent) even wider. But that jumble of numbers didn't – couldn't – quantify the difference in the impact made by the punches that did connect.

Not one judge gave so much as a single round to Hopkins, the erstwhile "Executioner" who of late had been calling himself "The Alien," an extraterrestrial from another planet not subject to the natural laws of diminishing returns that affect mere mortals of the human variety. Having witnessed any number of age-defying successes by Hopkins, more than a few reputable observers tended to agree that the old master had, indeed, discovered the Fountain of Youth and was bathing in it regularly. Although Kovalev went off as a nearly 3-to-1 wagering choice in the legal Nevada sports books, a poll of 23 boxing writers gave Hopkins a slight 12-11 edge to again shock the people of Earth and an online survey conducted by RingTV.com had 54 percent of respondents also choosing the ancient one.

But what proved to be the ongoing storyline for the 12-round bout was displayed in the first round, when Kovalev (26-0-1, 23 KOs) floored Hopkins (55-7-2, 32 KOs) with a short right hand. OK, so it was a flash knockdown; Hopkins spent much of the rest of the round and thereafter in cover-up mode, unable to establish any kind of an offensive

deterrent to Kovalev's sensible yet relentless attack. Never before had Hopkins, who takes pride in the fact he has not been knocked out or stopped in a professional career that dates back to 1988, shown any opponent such obvious respect. It wasn't so much that Hopkins was fleeing as it was him vainly trying to figure out a way to impose his will, which so frequently had been the case in the past when he befuddled and bamboozled younger men.

"He's a strong candidate for Fighter of the Year," Hopkins told the media in a gracious concession speech, nodding toward Kovalev at the postfight press conference. "Listen, y'all the ones that do the voting. I'm just sayin'. That's my opinion. He's smart, he's patient, he didn't get caught up in the emotional when I tried to suck him in."

The reference to FOY – an award Hopkins won from both THE RING and the Boxing Writers Association of America way back in 2001, when he dominated and then stopped the favored Felix Trinidad in the 12th round in a career-defining performance – is especially timely. On the afternoon of the fight, the BWAA conducted its annual winter business meeting in Atlantic City, one of the purposes of which was to accept nominations for its top awards for the calendar year of 2014. Those in attendance unanimously voted to place the Hopkins-Kovalev winner on the ballot, with strong support also going to key members of "Krusher's" crew: trainer John David Jackson and manager Egis Klimas in their respective categories, especially if their guy were to win.

After Kovalev seized control from the opening bell, the "leaders in the clubhouse," as they say in golf, with seven weeks remaining in the year would appear to be all three principals of Team Kovalev. Not since the 1992 awards, when Riddick Bowe, trainer Eddie Futch and manager Rock Newman rode a wave of support generated by Bowe's victory over Evander Holyfield in the first of their three classic showdowns to sweep the BWAA's "Triple Crown," has there been such an apparent leaning toward unanimity.

Hopkins got up from a first-round knockdown and remained on his feet but accomplished nothing beyond that.

"He literally put on a clinic on how to box a great boxer," Kovalev's beaming promoter, Main Events CEO Kathy Duva, said after her emerging superstar added Hopkins' IBF and WBA 175-pound belts to the WBO one he already possessed. "He pitched a shutout. I don't think that's anything anybody would have expected. I do think that was the least likely outcome and we got it. We found out Sergey (who previously had not gone beyond eight rounds in any bout) could go 12 rounds. We found out he can box with the very best in the world."

Kovalev, who originally is from Chelyabinsk, Russia, but lives in Los Angeles, had come to the U.S. as an unknown commodity in 2009, a fighter who was ignored by most

ROCK BOTTOM

Bernard Hopkins' shutout loss to Sergey Kovalev was the most one-sided of his seven defeats. Here are the numbers in terms of rounds lost and won, as well as percentage of rounds lost.

36-0 Sergey Kovalev,
UD, Nov. 8, 2014 (100 percent)

24-12 Roy Jones Jr.,
UD, May 22, 1993 (67 percent)

24-12 Chad Dawson,
MD, April 28, 2012 (67 percent)

23-13 Joe Calzaghe,
SD, April 19, 2008 (64 percent)

21-15 Jermain Taylor II,
UD, Dec. 3, 2005 (58 percent)

18-18 Jermain Taylor I,
SD, July 16, 2005 (50 percent)

Note: This chart does not include Hopkins' pro debut against Clinton Mitchell on Oct. 11, 1988, in which Mitchell won the four-round fight by majority decision. One card was 39-38 in favor of Mitchell, which makes it impossible to determine how many rounds each fighter won and lost.

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

of the major promoters on this side of the Atlantic. Duva finally took a chance on him, a decision that now appears to be the equivalent of a winning Powerball lottery ticket.

"I'm going to talk with Peter Nelson from HBO next week and we're going to start working on his next fight," Duva said when asked about Kovalev's immediate future. "But at this point there's no definitive plan to do anything. I would like it to be the best deal. This one was for the glory. Next time we're fighting for money."

If it were up to him, Kovalev would move directly into a matchup with the man who holds the only alphabet light heavyweight title he has yet to collect. That would be Adonis Stevenson, the WBC ruler who also is THE RING and lineal champion. Stevenson was to defend his strap against Dimitry Sukhotsky Dec. 19 in Quebec City on Showtime.

"There is one more champion," Kovalev said. "That would be Stevenson. Maybe he would be next opponent. We'll see."

Kovalev, whose wife, Natalya, gave birth to the couple's first child, son Aleksandr, on Oct. 20 when Sergey was away at training camp, is as much the embodiment of the American dream as ex-con-turned-legendary-champ Hopkins. The only difference is that Kovalev got to this fulfilled stage in his life from the cold of Chelyabinsk instead of the notoriously mean streets of an area of North Philly known as the Badlands.

"I wash the cars," Kovalev said of his hardscrabble youth. "I sell newspapers when I was a child. But not for all my life, you know? I begin to get some money for the boxing since 15 years old, 14 years old. Small money but it was more motivation. If you win Russian championship, you have a bonus. Was very big motivation. Right now is more motivation. Different fight, different money, different motivation."

It now seems evident that Kovalev was not going to fall for the Hopkins mind games that had so discombobulated Trinidad, William Joppy, Kelly Pavlik and any number of others. Maybe that was because Kovalev had the benefit of working with Jackson, who had been stopped in seven rounds by then-IBF middleweight champion Hopkins in 1997 and later was his assistant trainer for four years.

Jackson barely blinked when Hopkins, in a typical bit of gamesmanship, flatly rejected the notion that Jackson's experience with him somehow would prove beneficial to Kovalev. "John David Jackson says he knows everything there is to know about me," Hopkins said. "How can a teacher have credibility when the teacher has all F's? How can a teacher teach a student to have all A's when he has an F?"

But Jackson must have learned something from all his dealings with Hopkins. He instructed Kovalev to move forward but not to rush in wildly with the idea of scoring a quick knockout. So Kovalev, the big bopper, fought at a distance when it suited his purpose, a sound strategy that, as much as his undeniable power, served to keep Hopkins from settling into any kind of rhythm.

Perhaps the closest Hopkins has ever come to being stopped came in the 12th round when Kovalev landed a string of heavy blows that clearly hurt him. It is to B-Hop's credit that he refused to clinch or to stop trying to land that one desperation shot that miraculously might have turned the tide.

"I was determined to try to hit him so I could put him down," Hopkins said of his disinclination to tie Kovalev up as those final three minutes ticked off in what must have seemed like forever to the guy catching the worst of it. "There was no trying to survive in the 12th round; we was rumbling."

Now the question is, as Kovalev continues to ascend, whether there is another rumble left in Hopkins, who might finally have to acknowledge that he has reached the end of a very long, historic road as an active boxer.

"To Bernard I say, you need to stop already," Kovalev offered. "He is 49 years old. Come on. Is greatest record in the boxing world. Forty-nine, he was the holder of two titles."

Countered Golden Boy Promotions president Oscar De La Hoya, in whose company Hopkins is a partner: "I honestly think that Bernard Hopkins can go down in weight and challenge, let's say, a Julio Cesar Chavez (Jr.) or a fighter like 'Triple G' (Gennady Golovkin), who can come up to 170 or 168 pounds. I don't know what [Hopkins] will do but one thing for sure I know is that he's not going to retire."

Hopkins, for his part, was noncommittal. He said he was "50-50" on the notion of retirement but he was 100 percent certain of what he did not want to do next. "A rematch? Who with?" he said, incredulously, when someone asked if he would lobby for a second go at Kovalev.

"This man (Kovalev) is the champion. As far as I'm concerned, he is the best in the light heavyweight division. Obviously, the other light heavyweight (Stevenson) didn't want to fight him. I chose to fight him. I'm not looking for a cigar for second place, or a pat on the back. I'm not that kind of guy. But I recognize what is real. I've been in there with a lot of great fighters, and Sergey is the real deal." RING

A PRELUDE TO MAYWEATHER?

MANNY PACQUIAO MANHANDLES **CHRIS ALGIERI** AMID RENEWED TALK OF A MUCH BIGGER EVENT

By **Ron Borges**

This was a familiar sight from any angle on Nov. 22.

CHRIS HYDE/GETTY IMAGES

Mike Tyson once famously said, "Everyone has a plan until they get hit." It didn't take long on Nov. 22 for Chris Algieri to understand what he was talking about. The larger question seemed to be would Floyd Mayweather Jr. ever be willing to face the same situation?

Algieri stunned the boxing world when he was awarded a split decision and the WBO junior welterweight title in June despite being knocked down twice and having his right eye closed up like a venetian blind by Ruslan Provodnikov. His trainer, Tim Lane, insisted before and even during the showdown that followed four months later with WBO welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao in Macau that he would do the same. Of course, he wasn't the guy getting hit.

Pacquiao dropped Algieri six times (although two instances appeared to be slips), including twice in the ninth round in violent fashion almost immediately after Lane had told his already battered fighter that, "We are exactly where we need to be. Listen to me! I know you trust me!"

Hopefully, not after that speech. By that time, Algieri had already been down three times and had failed to land an effective counterpunch despite being regularly assaulted. Within a minute, Pacquiao would nail him again with a startlingly powerful straight left to the chin that sent Algieri sprawling onto the seat of his pants, his mind buzzing but by now surely convinced he was exactly where he did NOT need to be.

Pacquiao had not registered a knockout in five years, the last coming against Miguel Cotto in 2009, and many questioned if his once-vaunted punching power had failed to survive the ravages of time and 64 fights. He would not get

one on this evening either, because despite all his troubles Algieri is tougher than rawhide. That did not make him competitive but it made him difficult to discourage.

As more and more straight lefts found a landing strip on his face, it seemed as if Algieri had never faced a southpaw, at least not one as powerful and relentless as Pacquiao. Algieri had no answer for the straight left or the uppercut that shook him in the fourth round or the flurries that seemed to come in so fast he felt as if he'd stuck his head inside a beehive. He not only never hurt Pacquiao, who in fairness was a heavy favorite going into what was for all intents and purposes a well-paid sparring session, he seldom hit him.

The outcome did what was intended, however. It gave Pacquiao (57-5-2, 38 KOs) a risk-free stage on which to loudly make his case for the fight every boxing fan still craves: a showdown with the pound for pound best fighter in the world, Mayweather.

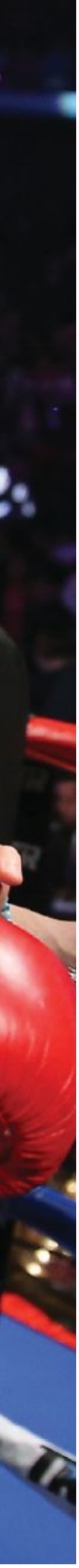
This fight has been talked about more than World War II is discussed on the History Channel yet it never has come close to reality. In the recent past, that had led Pacquiao to only reluctantly speak of it. However, both before and after facing Algieri (20-1, 8 KO), he talked incessantly about Mayweather, perhaps because he recognizes the urgency of the situation.

Pacquiao turned 36 in December and Mayweather will be 38 by the time he fights again next May and it is clear neither is the fighter they once were. Often a diminution of skills for two great fighters makes for a more compelling match, as it certainly did for Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, but time is the only undefeated force in sports and Pacquiao, at least, seems aware of it.

A year ago, in the same arena at the Venetian in Macau, he declined to say much about Mayweather after routing Brandon Rios in similar fashion. But even before facing Algieri, Pacquiao was on the offensive. He starred in a clever Foot Locker commercial released before the fight in which he never speaks Mayweather's name but makes it clear who he's talking about, finally jumping around hollering, "He's going to fight me! He's going to fight me!"

Don't count on it but Pacquiao did go after Mayweather as relentlessly as he did Algieri after winning a unanimous decision so one-sided that judge Michael Pernick gave him every round (120-102) and the other two judges gave Algieri one round (119-103).

CHRIS HYDE/GETTY IMAGES



Manny Pacquiao enjoyed the moment after his one-sided victory.

"It's time to step up and say yes," Pacquiao said. "The people deserve that fight. The fans deserve that fight. It's been a long time. I want that fight. They're always denying the fight. I think the fight has to happen."

Promoter Bob Arum, whom Mayweather abhors, confirmed he'd been involved in "secret" talks with CBS head honcho Les Moonvies and that Moonvies, whose company owns Mayweather's broadcasting partner, Showtime, had spoken with executives at HBO, which has exclusive rights to Pacquiao, about a shared distribution deal.

Such an arrangement is not without precedent, the most recent example being the Tyson-Lennox Lewis fight in 2002. It's not easy to make such a deal happen but nothing has been more difficult than getting the two biggest names in boxing together. No other sport would operate this way but then no other sport operates like boxing.

Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, even tempered his often stinging remarks about Mayweather's reluctance to test his greatness and reportedly brokered the meeting between Arum and Moonvies.

"It's always good [that there are talks]," Roach said after the fight. "I like challenges and that's a big challenge. He would be the best we have ever faced. It's not an easy fight by any means but I love Manny in that fight. I look forward to getting him ready for that fight more than anything. It will haunt them forever if it doesn't happen."

If it does, it's a more interesting match than it might have been several years ago primarily because Mayweather has slowed some, as Marco Maidana proved twice this year. A limited but tough guy like Maidana would not have been able to hit Mayweather with a banjo a few years ago but he hit him regularly in their two fights, although more the first time than the second.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, is not the explosive typhoon he once was. A guy like Algieri would never have survived long with him four years ago. But the slippage in both is what makes the match more alluring because neither would enter the arena that night believing they are risk-free.

Of course, some postulate that's why Mayweather, who seems obsessed more with retiring undefeated than challenging his own greatness, won't fight Pacquiao. One guy who hopes he does is Dallas Cowboys' owner Jerry Jones, who told a Dallas radio station he'd love to put a Mayweather-Pacquiao match on at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Jones, the NFL's most entrepreneurial owner, has some experience with that, having hosted Pacquiao victories over Joshua Clottey and Antonio Margarito in 2010. Always in search of big events to fill his futuristic stadium, Jones said, "Well, it's well known that I would walk over and I guess have to get in some boat time, too, to get over and meet [with Arum] in China to get it done. I'd be that excited about the possibility. It'd be a great fight. It's going to be contemporarily one of the greatest fights in the last 15 years when it does happen. It needs to be in our stadium. We'd love to just in any way have that fight here. It'd just be an epic event for our stadium."

It would also be an event that could jam 100,000 people inside his venue, far more than the sold-out 13,201 that filled Cotai Arena to watch Pacman eat up Algieri. Texas also carries the same kind of athlete-friendly income tax structure as Macau, maximizing the fighter's end of what most experts predict would be a $200 million event.

Mayweather was relatively mute on the subject immediately following Pacquiao's lopsided victory, which some took as a sign perhaps negotiations were going on. Certainly there's no question the two cable giants could come to an accommodation. Whether Arum and Mayweather can is another matter.

Only one thing was clear on Nov. 22: Algieri didn't have the ability to spoil the prospect of a Pacquiao-Mayweather fight.

"I had a feeling he would try to blast me out of there just because I'm not used to the big stage," he said. "The plan was to get to the later rounds without taking too much damage, step up the pace and land shots that would hurt him. We weren't specifically looking for the knockout but we were looking to put some damage on the guy."

That never occurred. Pacquiao headed home to the Philippines without a mark on him but carrying over $20 million in his pocket while Algieri left with some dents but also $1.675 million, his portion of a $2.7 million purse he'll share with his handlers. Not even Arum had much to say about what occurred in Macau. His time was spent trying to argue for the match he seemingly cannot make.

"We're tired," he said of the chase to reach an agreement with the elusive Mayweather. "Everywhere we go they ask, 'When is it going to happen? When are they going to fight?' I say enough is enough! Just make the fight happen!

"If boxing is to be considered a major sport, the fight has to happen. All the nonsense has to cease. There are no excuses any more. I will be at the phone. We're ready."

So is boxing, which has grown weary of seeing Pacquiao facing guys like Algieri and Rios or Mayweather boxing circles around guys like Maidana, Canelo Alvarez and Robert Guerrero. In truth, the time has come and gone and now returned for the fight to be made. Very likely it's the last time. The last time for Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr. to be exactly where they need to be: face to face in the ring.

James DeGale (left) and George Groves could be face to face sometime soon.

A LONG-SIMMERING RIVALRY

THE ANIMUS BETWEEN **GEORGE GROVES** AND **JAMES DEGALE** GOES BACK MANY YEARS

By **Gareth A Davies**

It was an interesting experiment here across The Pond, using Tony Bellew's hatred for Nathan Cleverly as the dangling carrot for a pay-per-view event on Nov. 22. It was a plan hatched by Sky Sports and their Box Office channel and Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Sport. Sky Box Office and its executive officers had divorced themselves from the credo that extra-pay television fights would only be for the greatest contests.

So Bellew and Cleverly clashed again in Liverpool, full of sound and fury, Bellew emerging with a split-decision victory in a 12-round cruiserweight fight and British bragging rights for the moment.

They met at the same venue three years ago at light heavyweight. Cleverly won that fight by a majority decision, successfully defending his WBO title that he later lost to that monster Sergey Kovalev.

There were no titles on the line. There were no unbeaten records or hot runs of form. So, in the end, Part II all boiled down to bad blood and pride. A grudge match in its purest sense.

But while Cleverly and Bellew took center stage as the main event, there was another potential domestic grudge match bubbling beneath the surface. An even better one. It involved two men also competing on the same card, albeit in separate bouts against foreign opposition.

Two men who know each other very well, having already fought twice, once as amateurs, once as professionals.

Their rivalry spilled over during the weigh-in to the Liverpool event. Trouble flared backstage when words were exchanged as the pair walked past each other at Liverpool's iconic St. George's Hall. Pushing and shoving escalated into both fighter's camps and family members getting involved.

Serious poison between them. George Groves is 2-0 against James DeGale thus far in their boxing careers but their rivalry is like no other in British boxing today. It goes back to when they were kids, you see. Not only that, it goes back to a time when they were clubmates at Dale Youth ABC, part of the same team.

And so it goes deeper than Bellew and Cleverly; it means more.

SCOTT HEAVEY/GETTY IMAGES

It's now fascinating to see them slowly but surely creep toward one another again.

Groves, of course, was a late addition to the Liverpool show, drafted in when complaints emerged about the quality of the undercard. Groves apparently did big numbers for his last fight, a European title win against Christopher Rebrasse in September, and therefore Sky Sports was keen to have him back on their channel. He added name value to the card.

His fight against America's Denis Douglin, however, was always going to be a relatively routine affair. Douglin, though game and busy with his hands, had lost three of his 20 pro fights and had been stopped twice. He's also more of a natural middleweight and is trained by his mother. Yes, his mother. Hence the nickname "Momma's Boy."

DeGale, meanwhile, had the tougher assignment. He faced Marco Antonio Periban of Mexico, a man who previously pushed Sakio Bika to a majority decision in a WBC world title fight. As we knew, Periban was durable, he was solid, he likes to throw plenty of leather, but he was also without a win in his previous three bouts.

Thus, no one was surprised that Groves stopped Douglin in seven rounds while DeGale only needed three rounds.

So Groves and DeGale will now wait and see what unfolds in the New Year. Groves is the mandatory challenger for Anthony Dirrell's WBC world title and DeGale is the mandatory challenger for Carl Froch's IBF world title.

Better than either of those fights, though, would be a stadium rematch between Groves and DeGale next summer. There is, after all, no longer-running feud in British boxing. Only the addition of two world titles could improve it.

MARTIN MURRAY VS. GENNADY GOLOVKIN

The St. Helens middleweight Martin Murray, who has twice come up on the wrong side of skewed judging decisions in world title fights, will now get the spotlight the 32-year-old merits when he faces Gennady Golovkin, the most feared pound-for-pound puncher in the sport, after defeating Domenico Spada in Monte Carlo.

Murray (29-1-1, 12 KOs) will return to one of Europe's glittering cities in the coastal resort within Monaco to face Golovkin on Feb. 21 for a spit-and-sawdust power struggle. His name will really be up in lights if he can pull off the improbable against the freakishly strong Kazakhstani.

It will be a tough, tough assignment yet you have to admire Murray's desire to face a man most would rather avoid, a puncher who reputedly hurts light heavyweights in sparring. The unbeaten WBA middleweight champion Golovkin (31-0, 28 KOs) will go in search of his record 19th straight stoppage against Murray. It is a huge ask, but Murray is teak tough.

Murray drew with Felix Sturm for the WBA middleweight title in 2011 and lost a tight decision to Sergio Martinez for the RING and WBC straps in Argentina in 2013.

It could be a case of third time lucky against Golovkin.

The fight against Spada was stopped midway through the seventh round, with the referee ruling that a cut from an accidental head butt in the third became too severe. Murray was awarded the scores of 67-66, 68-63 and 69-63 but was always ahead in the contest against the physically reckless Spada, who time and again threw himself head-first into the fray. The Italian must have one of the ugliest styles in boxing today. It sure isn't pretty to watch. Murray handled the night with maturity and composure.

Golovkin was ringside and told reporters respectfully: "Murray is a great fighter, very strong. I remember the Sergio Martinez bout; it was an amazing fight. Along with Matthew Macklin and Daniel Geale, Murray is one of the best pure boxers in the division."

Promoters Golden Gloves and K2 Promotions announced the bout minutes after Murray beat Spada.

"Murray is generally regarded as the best middleweight outside the world champions," said promoter Rodney Berman. "He won't be intimidated for one second fighting Golovkin."

Tom Loeffler of K2 Promotions, who looks after Golovkin, agrees. "Martin Murray will be the toughest opponent Gennady has ever faced," he said. "Gennady is making big inroads in the U.S. but it's also important for the fight to be in primetime in Europe, where he has so many fans."

On the same card, Stuart Hall saw his dreams of becoming IBF bantamweight champion for a second time evaporate as Randy Caballero claimed the vacant belt with a points win over the Darlington fighter. It was Hall's fourth loss.

Hall was outboxed by his unbeaten American opponent and was knocked down in the second round on the way to a points loss, 116-111, 116-111 and 118-110 on the judges' cards. The third card was

U.K. TOP 10

1. CARL FROCH
2. KELL BROOK
3. AMIR KHAN
4. CARL FRAMPTON
5. JAMES DEGALE
6. TYSON FURY
7. SCOTT QUIGG
8. GEORGE GROVES
9. JAMIE MCDONNELL
10. PAUL BUTLER

11-15: Martin Murray, Tony Bellew, Billy Joe Saunders, Kid Galahad, Nathan Cleverly.
(Through fights of Nov. 23, 2014)

Liam Smith is one of four brothers who are successful professional pro boxers.

harsh.

On a busy night for British boxers in three venues on that same night, Olympic gold medalist Luke Campbell extended his unbeaten professional record to nine fights as a lightweight with a fifth-round stoppage of the experienced Daniel Brizuela at Hull Ice Arena.

SMITH BROTHERS

Liam Smith spoke to me recently about his family. It's incredible that four brothers are all ranked in the Top 10 by the world's leading sanctioning bodies.

"It's great," Liam said. "It's not like we've got three good brothers and one that's not so good. Or three brothers and only one is good. We've got four of us and we're all at a very decent level."

They remain incredibly close as a family.

"Once one of us gets a chance," Liam said, "it feels like we've all been there. We watch each other and we go through it all with each other. Paul and Stephen turned pro before me so it seems they get their chances before me. When I was sitting in the dressing room for my British title fight, Paul and Stephen came in and were all with me. It just felt like I'd been there before. When Paul was getting ready for his British title fight, I was in the changing room with him along with my other brothers. We went through it together."

But at home, their father, Paul Sr., and their mother, Margaret, are devoted to the success of their sons.

"We just all love the sport," Liam said. "People ask if my dad was a boxer because it seems like it's a family thing. But it's not. We've got nobody else in the family who boxes. We've got some good footballers. My dad just loved the sport. He had every single boxing magazine that ever was. He had three amateur fights and then he quit. He still does weights twice a day, though. He won't let that go. He's 52 years of age and is still in

the gym twice a day. He was the reason Paul first went down the gym and he was the reason the rest of us followed.

"We're too close a family to have any kind of competition like that. We all push each other and we all give each other advice. We all want each other to be the best. Callum is my younger brother but that doesn't stop me learning things off him. And Paul will say he learns a lot of things off me.

"I think Callum's the best because he got a bit of all of us. He learnt off Paul, he learnt off Stephen and then he learnt off myself. He then seemed to develop into a really good fighter."

Liam revealed some amusing tales from their childhood.

"We used to be in a school around the corner and we'd run home from school to see who was first in for sparring before my mum and dad got home," he said. "They used to stop us sparring in the house as soon as they knew what we were up to. We'd hear the key go in the door and the gloves would go behind the couch. We had two pairs usually but sometimes we had one glove each. We'd have two of us fighting and the other two judging.

"Callum was 9, I was 11, Stephen was 14 and Paul was 16. Paul was always the best at that point but we would have absolute wars. … As soon as my mum or dad would come in, we'd be sat on the couch with boxing shorts on. They'd say, 'You've just been boxing, haven't you?' We'd be sat there red raw. They'd know right away. They couldn't stop us, though."

But the greatest credit from Liam goes to his mother. You can just imagine what Margaret went through while they were growing up.

"She's got to be a strong woman to put up with four lads like us," he said. "There's two sisters as well, one of which is disabled. That just shows the mentality of my mum. She's a very strong woman. Stronger than my dad, to be honest. She's the rock of our family and is always there to talk to.

"Paul left home at 19 and Stephen at 23. Before then, though, she had four lads who went to the gym twice a day living in the house. My mum would do all the washing for us. We never shared towels. We've got a towel each. She had to do a crazy amount of washing back then. We owe a lot to her."

In spite of her dedication to the boys, she is a wreck when they fight.

"She didn't come to Germany in the end," Liam said. "She paid to come but decided against it. She went to Paul's Commonwealth Games final against Jean Pascal, stood at the top tier outside the bar, and came down to watch him get his medal. She was going to do that in Germany, leave the arena, and then come back to see him get the belt. But in the end she just didn't want to go."

She simply cannot bear to watch.

"If any of us had a fight on television, my mum would sit in the garden with her headphones on and she'd time it," Liam said. "She'd know when the fight was over and she could relax again. My auntie would be in the living room watching it but my mum wouldn't watch any of it. She'd have the headphones on so she couldn't hear the screaming and shouting.

"There's times when we've knocked someone out quickly and given her the tape to watch back but she still doesn't watch it. She'll sit on the couch and be on her iPad. She won't look up and watch it. If we've got boxing on the telly, she'll just be on her iPad and pay it no attention.

"The best day of her life will be when the four of us have retired. But boxing has given us the life we've got now. I'm not saying we're living like Floyd Mayweather, but we've all got a job and a purpose and we're sportsmen. It's a nice job to have. She's proud of that." RING

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.

Doug Fischer believes a fight between Manny Pacquiao (right) and Danny Garcia would be well received.

BEST OF DOUGIE'S MAILBAG

EXCERPTS FROM THE **RINGTV.COM** EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

By **Doug Fischer**

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag."

Excerpts from Fischer's online column from the previous month now appear in the printed edition. The following excerpts are from the Nov. 10, 17 and 24 editions of the Monday and Friday mailbag.

DAVID, from Dublin, says Manny Pacquiao looked better fighting at a lighter weight (143.8 pounds instead of the welterweight limit of 147) during his one-sided WBO welterweight title defense against Chris Algieri, although he acknowledged that the Filipino legend was facing an opponent he was expected to beat. He says he would like to see Pacquiao drop down to 140 pounds and fight THE RING junior welterweight champion Danny Garcia, who Freddie Roach has previously mentioned as a potential future opponent for his star fighter. David favors Pacquiao to beat Garcia.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I'd also favor Pacquiao to beat Garcia but that's a fight I'd like to see. It would be a good style matchup (two fast and versatile boxer-punchers), it would be for THE RING junior welterweight championship (which the Filipino star briefly held after smashing Ricky Hatton) and I think it would be a successful pay-per-view event. Pacquiao will bring in Filipino/Filipino-American fans in Texas,

XAUME OLLEROS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

California and other parts of the West Coast, as well as the casual fans. Garcia will tap into the East Coast and Puerto Rican markets. And Angel Garcia and Freddie Roach talk enough trash at the press conferences, on media conference calls and during 24/7 episodes to whip social media into a frenzy and keep a good buzz on the fight during the buildup.

ANGHEL SAGRADO, from Abu Dhabi, UAE, is awed by the skill and talent of Vasyl Lomachenko, who he likens to an "artist" and "poetry in motion." He says it's time for the WBO featherweight titleholder to fight elite boxers and would love to see him face RING 122-pound champ Guillermo Rigondeaux. He favors Lomachenko in that Olympic legend showdown but is curious about Fischer's opinion on the matchup.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I wouldn't put any money on this opinion but I would also pick Lomachenko to beat his fellow two-time Olympic gold medalist. I think his footwork, angles, in-and-out movement, crazy fast reflexes and higher work rate would be the key to overcoming the Cuban's uncanny timing and counterpunching ability. It's strange to hear fans clamor for a guy with only four pro bouts to "fight the elites" but in Lomachenko's case it's a reasonable expectation thanks to his amateur background and obvious elite-level ability. While I wouldn't hold my breath for the showdown with Rigondeaux (due to the Cuban's sour relationship with Top Rank and his unwillingness to go up in weight) I think Lomachenko's management has targeted the other top featherweights. That includes promotional stablemate and undefeated WBA titleholder Nicholas Walters and experienced WBC beltholder Jhonny Gonzalez.

DAVID, from Nashville, didn't like the talk of Bernard Hopkins fighting Adonis Stevenson after the 49-year-old legend was shut out by Sergey Kovalev. He doesn't think Hopkins deserves a shot at THE RING champ and believes the future Hall of Famer should "retire with dignity" and perhaps pursue a broadcast career.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: Hopkins gave it his all against Kovalev but did so on his terms. He wasn't going to commit to taking it to the younger, stronger, more active and surprisingly savvy fighter. He wasn't going to go out on his shield like Archie Moore did against Rocky Marciano but he wasn't totally in survival mode either. He did all he could not to be clipped or overwhelmed by Kovalev but he was always looking for that one shot that could catch the Russian off guard and possibly turn the fight in his favor. The shot was never made available to him. I'm just glad he wasn't seriously hurt or busted up too badly. He went the distance, kept some of his pride and probably gained even more respect with the classy manner that he handled himself with after the fight. I'd love it if he retired and did some broadcast work. I know he'd be a good commentator once he got enough practice and the hang of it. I worked him on a few broadcasts in 2009. I'm pretty sure Hopkins will fight at least once more but I don't think he will stay around for the dreaded "one fight too many." If he challenged Stevenson, I'd worry about his health just as I did prior to Saturday's fight but I wouldn't have a problem with it. Yeah, he just got shut out by Kovalev but he held two titles going into the bout and he's still a legit Top-10 contender. He's certainly better than Stevenson's last three challengers (Tony Bellew, Andrzej Fonfara and Dmitry Sukhotsky).

DAN, from Connecticut, was entertained by Wladimir Klitschko's stoppage of Kubrat Pulev. He believes the reputations of THE RING's heavyweight champ and the top contender were enhanced by the show they put on. He'd like to see a rematch one day as he thinks Pulev will gain from the experience and could improve.

DOUGIE'S REPLY: I think Pulev will improve but as fun as he made the Klitschko challenge I'd like to see Pulev face a few Top-10 contenders – such as Alexander Povetkin, Bryant Jennings or Vyacheslav Glazkov – before getting another shot at Wladdy. I'm not a big fan of Pulev's stiff-as-a-board, stand-up boxing style or his wavy "magic wand" jab but I like his attitude. The big Bulgarian came to fight. I respect that and I think he can make for some good heavyweight scraps if he's in against an aggressive type, like Chris Arreola or Dereck Chisora. I also think he can beat most of the top dogs in the division. I think Klitschko's dominant victory over a credible opponent coupled with the live HBO broadcast in the U.S. and his eye-catching career stats (which HBO's crew made sure to pump up), will definitely enhance the champ's reputation in America. Wladdy and Big Brother Vitali have had a hot-and-cold relationship with American boxing fans and sports media over the past 15 years. The U.S. market hasn't been kind to them in recent years for a number of reasons – fighting in Europe, boxing in a safety-first, sometimes ugly style and occasionally facing unworthy competition – but scoring lots of knockdowns en route to a KO victory goes a long way in terms of making fans and the press forget about past disappointments or frustrations. I think Wlad is in position to capture the respect (and maybe the awe) of the American boxing audience with his next two fights on HBO, especially if he faces the winner of the Bermane Stiverne-Deontay Wilder WBC title bout for all the heavyweight marbles and then takes on the winner of the Tyson Fury-Chisora rematch in what I view as a can't-miss European blockbuster event.

Alicia Ashley, 47, wants to become the oldest boxing champion ever.

TONY BALDWIN

40-SOMETHING SPECIAL

ALICIA ASHLEY, THE FEMALE VERSION OF BERNARD HOPKINS, IS STILL GOING STRONG

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

After Bernard Hopkins' one-sided loss to Sergey Kovlev in November, boxing fans in their 40s apparently didn't have anyone in their age bracket to cheer for anymore.

Well, maybe they needed to look a little deeper to find New York City's Alicia Ashley, who improved to 22-10-1 on the night of Kovalev-Hopkins. She stopped Grecia Nova in seven rounds at the Karibe Convention Center in Petionville, Haiti.

Ashley is 47 and the southpaw with the most fitting nickname in the business, "Slick," isn't planning to call it quits anytime soon.

"I said I'm not retiring before Bernard Hopkins because I want to break the record of becoming the oldest champion," Ashley said. She laughed after making that statement but isn't joking, especially after a controversial majority-decision loss to RING pound-for-pound list member Jackie Nava in September has her more fired up than ever.

"I was disheartened with the result of my last fight but it revitalized me," she said. "It sent me back to square one. It was like, 'Let's go, let's do the next one,' because we're doing

that rematch."

If you're a serious fight fan, you probably know who the Jamaica-born Ashley is. She's a three-division world champion who has fought and beat the best as a pro since 1999. And that's not counting an amateur slate that includes three New York Golden Gloves titles and two national championships.

To say she is one of the best ever is not an overstatement. Outside of the hardcore fight community, however, the mention of Ashley's name would likely produce blank stares.

"I've never been one that's really promoted myself," she said. "Everyone has always said to me, 'Oh, you should get a publicist.' The thing about it is, I love to box, so for me it's just boxing. It's not about being famous."

It's obviously not about the money either, as Ashley admits that despite her status in the sport, "the money hasn't changed. So it has to be for the love because if I was waiting around for the money, I would have been out of this a long time ago."

To put food on the table, Ashley works full-time at Brooklyn's renowned Gleason's Gym, training both the next generation of fighters and those who just want to stay in shape. She's one of the most popular figures on the New York fight scene, which isn't surprising given her easygoing personality and infectious smile.

And while the next line should say how she turns into a ferocious knockout artist once the bell rings on fight night, that's just not her style. Ashley is a sweet scientist. When asked how she's been able to remain an elite boxer at 47, she says, "If they saw the fight [with Nava], they saw that I don't really get hit. That's the main secret."

The fight with Nava took place at the Arena Ciudad de Mexico in Mexico City, which wasn't the first time Ashley has left the States in order to find fights. She has taken on local favorites in Mexico, Panama, Argentina, Germany and North Korea, among other places. And she has no regrets.

"I enjoy going away to fight," Ashley said. "People say, 'Oh, you most likely won't get the decision if you go away to fight.' But practically every place else that I've gone to, we're the main event and it's on television. Argentina, Mexico, Germany. The U.S. not [showcasing] females is what I feel is holding us back. … Everyone wants to follow the U.S. but everybody else is ahead of the U.S. in boxing. I don't understand what they're waiting for and waiting to watch because every place else is showing it."

That statement is 100 percent accurate. And while most of her peers hold out hope that a change is coming soon, Ashley – a true New Yorker – is more of a realist. She says that while the sport had its chances to be mainstream over the years, that ship may have sailed already.

That's unfortunate but it's not stopping Alicia Ashley from doing what she does, both in the ring as one of the best boxers in the world and outside it as an ambassador for the sport and a role model for the next generation.

"I know that the people that enjoy boxing know about me," she said. "I appreciate that and I also appreciate the fact that the next generation of female boxers know about me. That's what I'll have to be satisfied with." RING

WOMEN'S TOP 10

1. CECILIA BRAEKHUS
Norway • 26-0 (7 KOs)
Welterweight

2. JELENA MRDJENOVICH
Canada • 33-9-1 (17 KOS)
Featherweight

3. YESICA YOLANDA BOPP
Argentina • 27-1 (12 KOs)
Flyweight

4. JESSICA CHAVEZ
Mexico • 21-3-3 (4 KOs)
Junior flyweight

5. DELFINE PERSOON
Belgium • 31-1 (14 KOs)
Lightweight

6. JESSICA CHAVEZ
Mexico • 21-4-3 (4 KOs)
Junior flyweight

7. AVA KNIGHT
U.S. • 13-2-3 (5 KOs)
Flyweight

8. JACKIE NAVA
Mexico • 30-4-3 (13 KOs)
Junior featherweight

9. IBETH ZAMORA SILVA
Mexico • 21-5 (8 KOs)
Junior flyweight

10. LAYLA MCCARTER
U.S. • 36-13-5 (8 KOs)
Lightweight

Through fights of Nov. 23, 2014

RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

Nicholas Loureiro

Randy Caballero (left) won his first world title by outpointing Stuart Hall in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

RANDY CABALLERO UD 12 STUART HALL

Date: Oct. 25
Site: Monte Carlo, Monaco
Division: Bantamweight
Weights: Caballero 117.9 pounds, Hall 116.97
Ring rating (going into fight): Neither fighter rated
Network: Channel 5/U.K.

Make no mistake, the face of Generation Next is Vasyl Lomachenko, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who stepped off the victory stand in London and won a title in his third pro bout.

Randy Caballero has none of Lomachenko's Olympic hardware but it would be just as much of a mistake not to make him a close second, if not a rival, to the Ukrainian.

In some categories, Caballero is even ahead of Lomachenko.

Category 1: Caballero was 24 when he won his first title, the IBF bantamweight championship, by outpointing the U.K.'s Stuart Hall 116-111, 118-110, 116-111. Lomachenko was 26 when he won the WBO's featherweight belt with a majority decision over Gary Russell.

Category 2: With the decision over Hall, Caballero remained unbeaten at 22-0 (with 13 knockouts). Lomachenko has a loss. Orlando Salido beat him up and won a split decision in a rough-and-tough introduction to the pro game in his second bout.

They have taken different routes to reach a common point. For Caballero, it's been more traditional than Lomachenko's ascension, which bypassed the prospect stage altogether.

If not for timing and injury, Caballero might have taken the same path. He was a celebrated amateur in his own right with a record of about 167-10. But he was too young to qualify for the 2008 Olympics. He hurt a hand before 2012 trials. The injury left him with no option. He went pro. His style was a perfect fit.

The boxer-puncher has proven to be too much for everybody. Hall (16-4-2, 7 KOs) was just the latest. He had guts but no chance.

"That was most definitely a learning experience," Caballero told RingTV.com. "There were some mistakes that I made but that was my first 12-round fight and it was a tough fight. … I had to earn that title so nobody can sit there and say that this title was handed to me. I fought a world-class fighter and he came strong and hungry for that title."

Caballero knocked Hall down with a left in the second. Hall, 34, got up and turned the bout into a brawl in the middle rounds. Caballero endured a low blow in the fifth but recovered and then let the boxer in him take over with precise shots from a distance that a tiring Hall could not close.

"Now, everybody knows I can go 12 rounds perfectly," said Caballero, a native of Indio, California, who flew to Managua with his Nicaraguan father and trainer to celebrate the title.

Caballero hopes Tomoki Kameda, the WBO's 118-pound champion, is among those who know.

"That's the fight we're talking about," said Caballero, who over the next few years figures to talk about a lot of possibilities. Maybe even Lomachenko.

WORLDWIDE RESULTS

Go to http://bit.ly/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.

NO. 1 SHINSUKE YAMANAKA UD 12 SURIYAN SOR RUNGVISAI

Oct. 22, Tokyo (NTV)

★ For Shinsuke Yamanaka, it was one step in a global plan. It started slowly but ended with a message that he intends to prove he is the world's best bantamweight.

He'll get no argument from Suriyan Sor Rungvisai.

Sor Rungvisai (37-6-1, 16 KOs) was tough enough to threaten Yamanaka (22-0-2, 16 KOs) in the early rounds. The former 115-pound champ from Thailand led after four on one card. He was tough enough to endure repeated left hands that resulted in three knockdowns in successive rounds, the seventh, eighth and ninth.

But toughness didn't amount to much on the scorecards. They were unanimous – 114-110, 116-108 and 115-109 – for Yamanaka in his seventh straight title defense.

"I want to fight in a unification bout to determine the strongest bantamweight," said Yamanaka, who hopes his next fight is in the U.S.

NO. 2 ALEXANDER POVETKIN KO 10 CARLOS TAKAM

Oct. 24, Moscow, TV/2-Russia

★ The heavyweights have been about Wladimir Klitschko and everybody else.

The second-best still appears to be Alexander Povetkin, who reminded us of that with a knockout of Carlos Takam. But it wasn't easy.

Povetkin (28-1, 20 KOs), 2-0 since a loss to Klitschko, started slowly. After four rounds, he trailed on two cards. But Takam (30-2-1, 23 KOs) tired in the eighth. Povetkin capitalized, dropping him in the ninth. It was only a matter of time. At 54 seconds of the 10th, Povetkin landed a left that knocked Takam down and out.

All roads lead back to Klitschko. But Bermane Stiverne might be next in Povetkin's comeback if Stiverne doesn't fight Deontay Wilder.

"I'm not ruling out a title collision," promoter Andrey Ryabinsky said.

NO. 1 HEKKIE BUDLER UD 12 XIONG ZHAO ZHONG

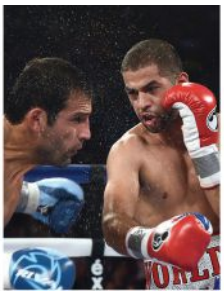
Oct. 25, Monte Carlo (ESPN.com)

★ Hekkie Budler has exotic pets, some much bigger than he is. Take the python, for instance. The snake can grow to 21 feet and 400 pounds, four times longer and heavier than the 5-foot-3, 105-pound Budler.

But the reptile had to go and the tale of the tape had nothing to do with it. It liked to bite. Damage to the hands, Budler told South African media, was "too hectic."

With the pet presumably out of striking distance, Budler (27-1, 9 KOs) has made it too hectic for anybody in front of him. Xiong Zhao Zhong (24-6-1, 14 KOs) tried but lost a 114-112, 118-108, 114-112 decision.

In the second a Xiong left floored Budler, who had never been down before and reacted as if he would never be again. He dropped Xiong, an ex-strawweight champion, in the third and then overwhelmed him with a whirlwind work rate.



SADAM ALI TKO 9 LUIS ABREGU

Nov. 8, Atlantic City (HBO)

★ A crowd at the top of the welterweight division might have to make room for a new contender. Say hello to Sadam Ali.

Ali introduced himself by saying goodbye to Luis Abregu in an upset that represents a calling card. In 2015, we'll see if Ali follows up with victories that allow him to stick around after his party-crashing performance.

"It's my coming out," Ali (21-0, 13 KOs) said after the fight.

Abregu's power was no factor. Ali made sure of it, overwhelming his opponent with speed and power of his own. Ali knocked him down in the sixth round with a right. In the ninth, Abregu (36-2, 29 KOs) looked to be finished. Ali landed a left. Abregu went to his knees, as if he wanted it to end. Harvey Dock answered his prayer, stopping it at 1:54 of the round.

NO. 10 FELIX STURM D 12 NO. 3 ROBERT STIEGLITZ

Nov. 8, Stuttgart, Germany (SAT 1)

★ A dreaded draw? Not this time.

Felix Sturm and Robert Stieglitz proved late Alabama football coach Bear Bryant wrong. Sometimes, a tie is more exciting than kissing your sister.

Sturm, a four-time middleweight champ ranked at 160 pounds for 10 years, met former super middleweight champ Robert Stieglitz at a catchweight of 166.5.

The only compromise was on the scale. In the ring, it was back and forth, dramatic throughout.

Stieglitz (39-4-3, 18 KOs) threw more punches; Sturm (47-4-1, 27 KOs) was more accurate. One judge had it 115-113 for Stieglitz. One had the same score for Sturm, who was badly bloodied over his right eye in the ninth round. The third scored it 114-114. At ringside, possible Sturm opponent Arthur Abraham thought Sturm won.

However, it was unanimous among the German fans on hand. They want a rematch.

CHAMPION
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
KO 5 **NO. 1 KUBRAT PULEV**
Nov. 15, Hamburg, Germany (HBO, RTL)

★ With apologies to the San Antonio Spurs, this is supposed to be a sports era without dynasties. Try telling that to Wladimir Klitschko.

If anything, THE RING heavyweight champ seems to be getting better or at least more versatile. It's easy to think you've seen everything from the 38-year-old. If that was Kubrat Pulev's assumption, it was a bad one.

Klitschko (63-3, 53 KOs) is known for his heavy jab and right hand. Against Pulev (20-1, 11 KOs), Klitschko unleashed an unexpected punch, a left hook, in the fifth. Checkmate. It was over. The result wasn't a surprise even though Pulev was given more of a chance than the parade of no-hopers who preceded him.

From a heavyweight champion often criticized for being predictable, the surprise was in the way he scored the knockout at 2:11 of the round. Who says he's boring?

CHAMPION
DONNIE NIETES
TKO 7 **CARLOS VELARDE**
Nov. 15, Cebu City, Philippines (beIN Sports, ABS-CBN)

★ Mention the Philippines and you think only of Manny Pacquiao, who has money, a congressional seat and celebrity. But Donnie Nietes has something Pacquiao doesn't.

Nietes (34-1-4, 20 KOs) is poised to be the longest-reigning champion in Filipino history. He'll surpass junior lightweight Gabriel Elorde, the original "Flash," on Jan. 1. Elorde, THE RING's 78th best fighter in 2002, held a title for seven years, three months.

Nietes' Happy New Year will mark Day One in the fourth month of his seventh year as a strawweight and junior fly champ. It continued against a bloodied Velarde (26-4-1, 14 KOs), who quit – appropriately enough – after the seventh round.

Nietes wanted a definitive KO to punctuate what many thought was his goodbye to 108 pounds. But he says he'll stay at 108 for two more bouts and more Filipino history.

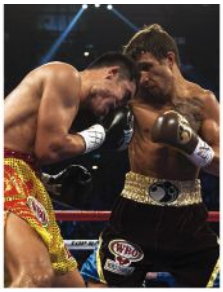
CHAMPION
ROMAN GONZALEZ
TKO 6 **ROCKY FUENTES**
Nov. 22, Yokohama, Japan (beIN Sports, WOWOW)

★ There was a ring where there are usually world-class swimmers. The water was gone, drained from the Yokohama International Swimming Pool. But the class was still there in the unstoppable Roman Gonzalez, who continues to wade into the pound-for-pound debate at a riptide rate.

Gonzalez (41-0, 35 KOs), THE RING's flyweight champion and No. 7 in the magazine's pound-for-pound ratings, overwhelmed Rocky Fuentes, knocking him down midway through the sixth with a combination and then finishing him with a merciless blitz for a stoppage at 2:11 of the round.

"I used a lot of uppercuts, as planned, and I think I got some good rights in too," Gonzalez told poolside media.

His array of punches is adding up to a hit list that includes seven straight stoppages in an unbeaten record with an 85 percent KO ratio. Those are impressive numbers.



NO. 5 VASYL LOMACHENKO
UD 12
CHONLATARN PIRIYAPINYO
Nov. 23, Macau, China (HBO)

★ Vasyl Lomachenko has experienced more within four pro bouts than many do in 40. He has won a title. He has suffered defeat and injury.

That's not an apprenticeship. It's not a career, either. But it sets the stage for what is projected to be professional acclaim for the two-time Olympic gold medalist from Ukraine.

Lomachenko (3-1, 1 KO) displayed his amateur education with versatility in overcoming a mid-round injury to his left hand for a 120-107 decision on all three cards over Thailand's Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo (52-2, 33 KOs).

A possible showdown with the emerging Nicholas Walters looms for Lomachenko, who scored a knockdown in the fourth before hurting his hand.

"I want to fight Walters and from there fight all the champions and clean up the division," said Lomachenko, who said x-rays showed that his hand was not broken. "I want all of the belts."

NO. 8 JESSIE VARGAS
UD
12 **ANTONIO DEMARCO**
Nov. 23, Macau, China (HBO)

★ Jessie Vargas and Roy Jones Jr. put their heads together. Literally. They bumped foreheads the way people bump fists.

It was Vargas' way of saying thanks to Jones, his new trainer.

Thanks for the credibility.

The gesture came after the 10th round of Vargas' junior welterweight decision win, 116-112 on all three cards, over Antonio De Marco (31-4-1, 23 KOs) and lingering skepticism.

Versatility was evident in Vargas (26-0, 9 KOs) in his first fight with the legendary Jones.

"The variation I have," said Vargas, who endured a cut under his left eye in the second round and a big left in the ninth, "I scare him with the hook. Then the right and body shot come in."

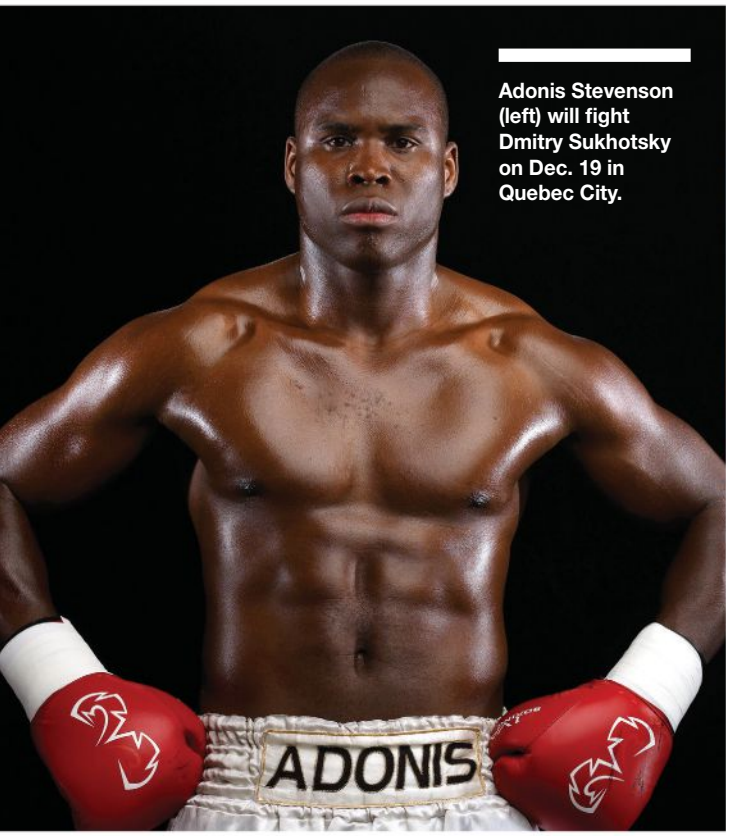
It was hard to say what's next. It was premature to say Vargas was a possibility for Manny Pacquiao. But it wasn't premature to say he gained respect.

YAMANAKA: KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; BUDLER: REUTERS; ALI: JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; STURM: THOMAS KIENZLE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; LOMACHENKO/VARGAS: XAUME OLLEROS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

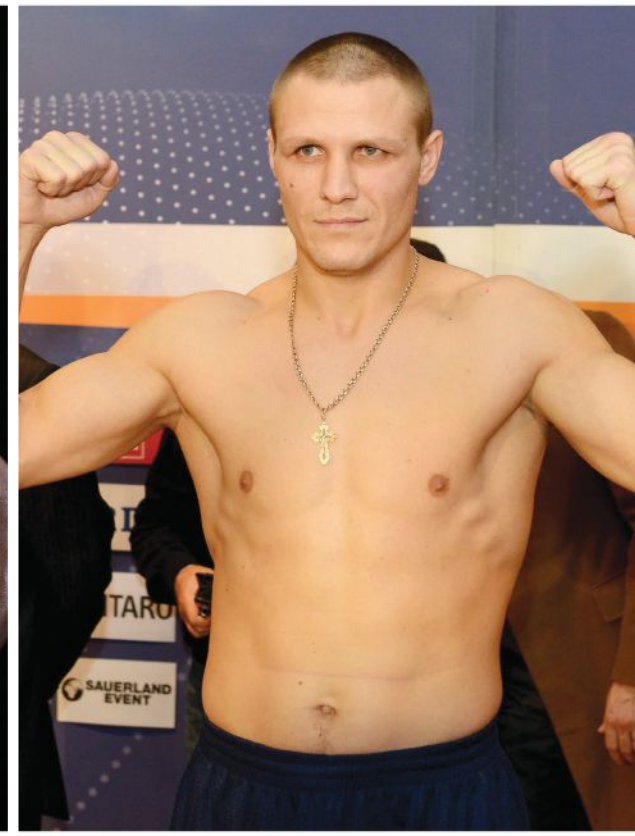
COMING UP

PREDICTIONS ARE MADE BY RING STAFF MEMBERS MICHAEL ROSENTHAL, DOUG FISCHER AND LEM SATTERFIELD.

DEC.



Adonis Stevenson (left) will fight Dmitry Sukhotsky on Dec. 19 in Quebec City.



ADONIS STEVENSON VS. DMITRY SUKHOTSKY

Date: Dec. 19
Location: Colisee de Quebec, Quebec City
Division: Light heavyweight (for Stevenson's RING and WBC titles)
TV: Showtime
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★ ★ ★ ★
Also fighting: Andre Dirrell vs. Derek Edwards, super middleweights; Jo Jo Dan vs. Kevin Bizier, welterweights; Artur Beterbiev vs. Jeff Page Jr., light heavyweights
Significance: Stevenson (24-1, 20 KOs) squandered the momentum he gained in 2013, fighting (and beating) only pesky Andrzej Fonfara in 2014. Sukhotsky (22-2, 16 KOs) doesn't have the name recognition to reignite interest in Stevenson but he has pop in his punches, which could make for an interesting fight.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Stevenson KO 7; Fischer – Stevenson KO 10; Satterfield – Stevenson UD

OMAR NARVAEZ VS. NAOYA INOUE

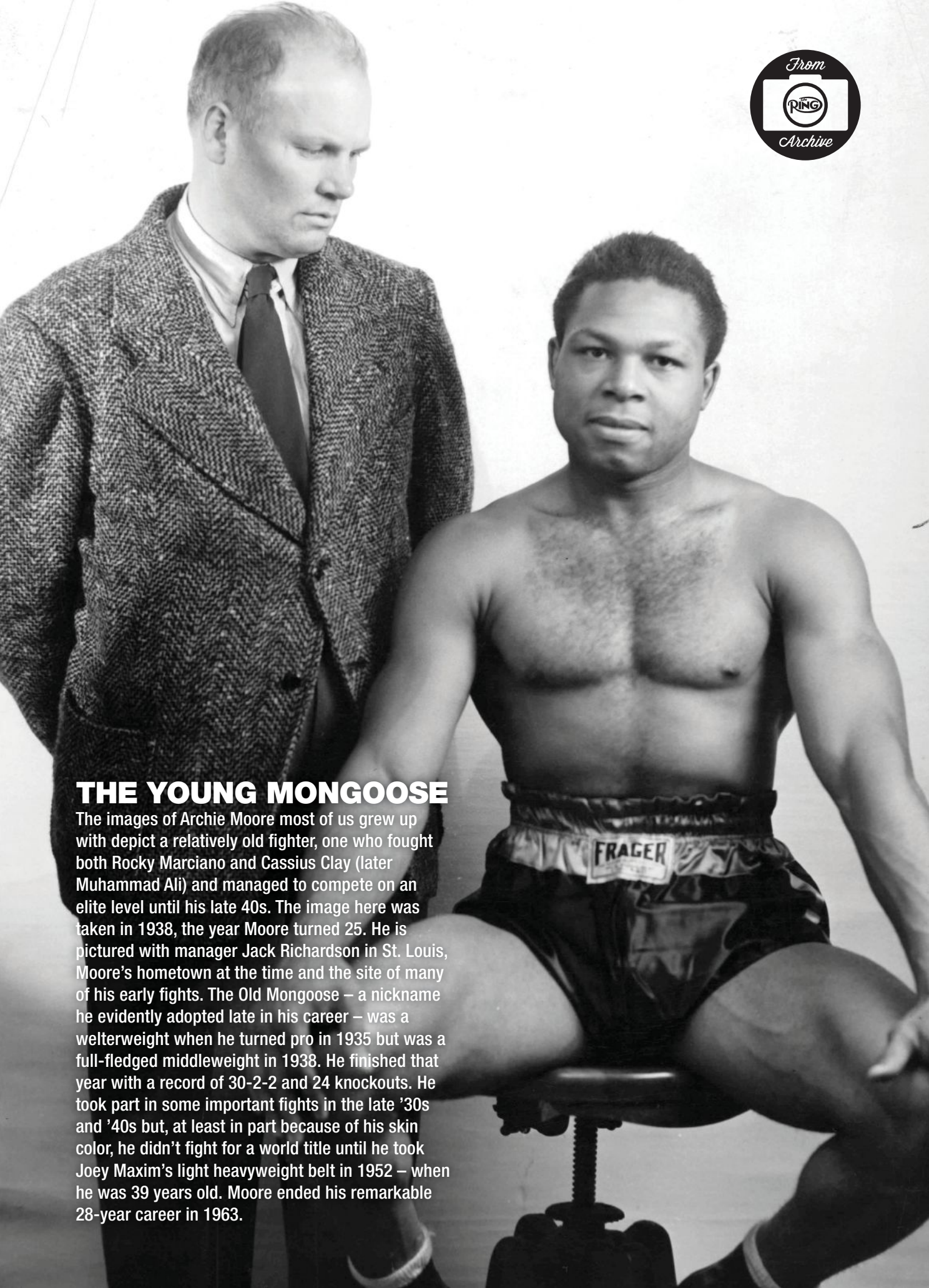
Date: Dec. 30
Location: Metropolitan Gym, Tokyo
Division: Junior bantamweight (for Narvaez's WBO title)
TV: None in U.S.
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★ ★ ★ ★
Also fighting: Akira Yaegashi vs. Pedro Guevara, junior flyweights (for vacant WBC title); Jorge Linares vs. Javier Prieto, lightweights (for vacant WBC title)
Significance: Narvaez (43-1-2, 23 KOs) struggled for a second time to outpoint Felipe Orucuta in September, which could be a sign that the 39-year-old, longtime titleholder is vulnerable. The 21-year-old Inoue (7-0, 6 KOs) has been a sensation but is jumping up two weight classes. He wears the WBC junior flyweight belt.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Inoue KO 8; Fischer – Inoue UD; Satterfield – Narvaez SD

DEC. 20 – Jesus Cuellar vs. Ruben Tamayo, featherweights, Shelton, Wash. (Showtime)
DEC. 20 – Andy Ruiz vs. Sergey Liakhovich, heavyweights, Phoenix (UniMas)
DEC. 31 – Takashi Uchiyama vs. Israel Perez, junior lightweights (for Uchiyama's WBA title), Tokyo
DEC. 31 – Kohei Kono vs. Norberto Jimenez, junior bantamweights (for Kono's WBA title), Tokyo
DEC. 31 – Alberto Rossel vs. Ryoichi Taguchi, junior flyweights (for Rossel's WBA title), Tokyo

JAN.

JAN. 16 – Willie Monroe Jr. vs. Antoine Douglas, middleweights, Verona, N.Y. (ESPN2)
JAN. 16 – Petr Petrov vs. Juan Carlos Burgos, lightweights, Verona, N.Y. (ESPN2)
JAN. 23 – Richar Abril vs. Anthony Crolla, lightweights (for Abril's WBA title), Manchester, England
JAN. 24 – Tony Thompson vs. Odlanier Solis, heavyweights, Dusseldorf, Germany

SUKHOTSKY: MICHA WILL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

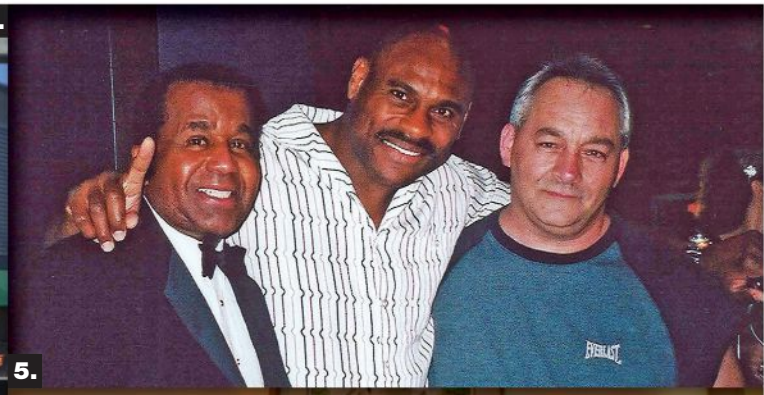


THE YOUNG MONGOOSE

The images of Archie Moore most of us grew up with depict a relatively old fighter, one who fought both Rocky Marciano and Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali) and managed to compete on an elite level until his late 40s. The image here was taken in 1938, the year Moore turned 25. He is pictured with manager Jack Richardson in St. Louis, Moore's hometown at the time and the site of many of his early fights. The Old Mongoose – a nickname he evidently adopted late in his career – was a welterweight when he turned pro in 1935 but was a full-fledged middleweight in 1938. He finished that year with a record of 30-2-2 and 24 knockouts. He took part in some important fights in the late '30s and '40s but, at least in part because of his skin color, he didn't fight for a world title until he took Joey Maxim's light heavyweight belt in 1952 – when he was 39 years old. Moore ended his remarkable 28-year career in 1963.

AT THE FIGHTS

1. Stevan Abt (left) with Paulie Malignaggi at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas the day after Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Marcos Maidana II in September. **2.** Oscar De La Hoya (left) with Evan Nahuat at the Jo Jo Diaz-Roberto Castaneda card in November in Indio, Calif. **3.** Ernesto Castaneda (left) with Canelo Alvarez at the Alvarez-Erislandy Lara New York press conference before their fight in July. **4.** Danny Magallan (right) with John Molina Jr. at the Kell Brook-Shawn Porter fight in August in Carson, Calif. **5.** Jerry Lams (right) is pictured with the late Emanuel Steward (left) and former heavyweight titleholder Oliver McCall in 2009. **6.** Melissa Sapp (left) and Steven G'Sell (right) have a little fun with Andre Ward at Hall of Fame Weekend in June in Canastota, N.Y.



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Send us photos of you posing next to a well-known fighter or other boxing personality and we will consider if for publication in the magazine. Send photos to atthefights@sepublications.com. Make sure to include your name(s), the names of those in the photo, when and where the photo was taken and your contact information. See you at the fights!

THIS AIN'T NO FANTASY

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